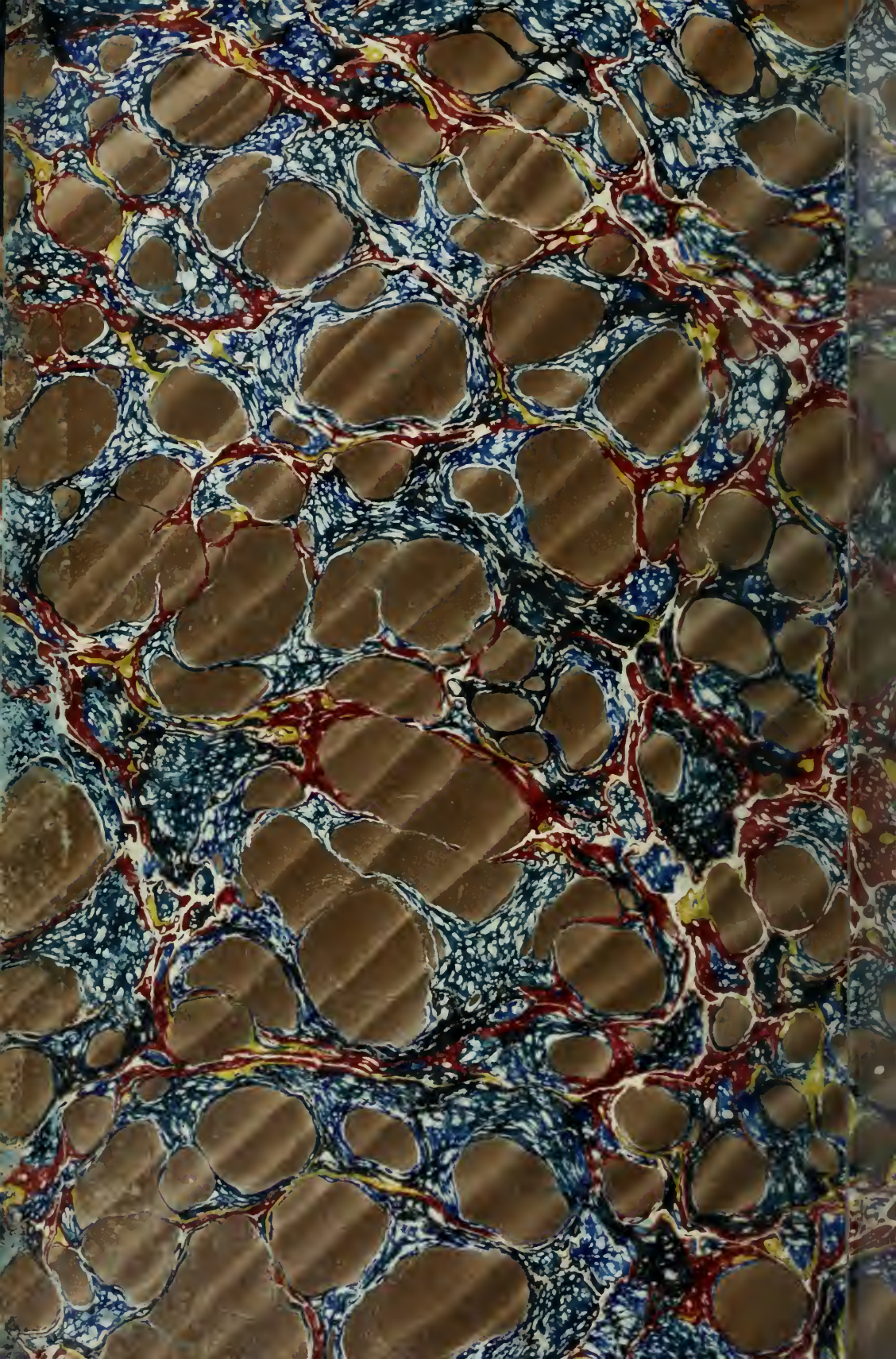

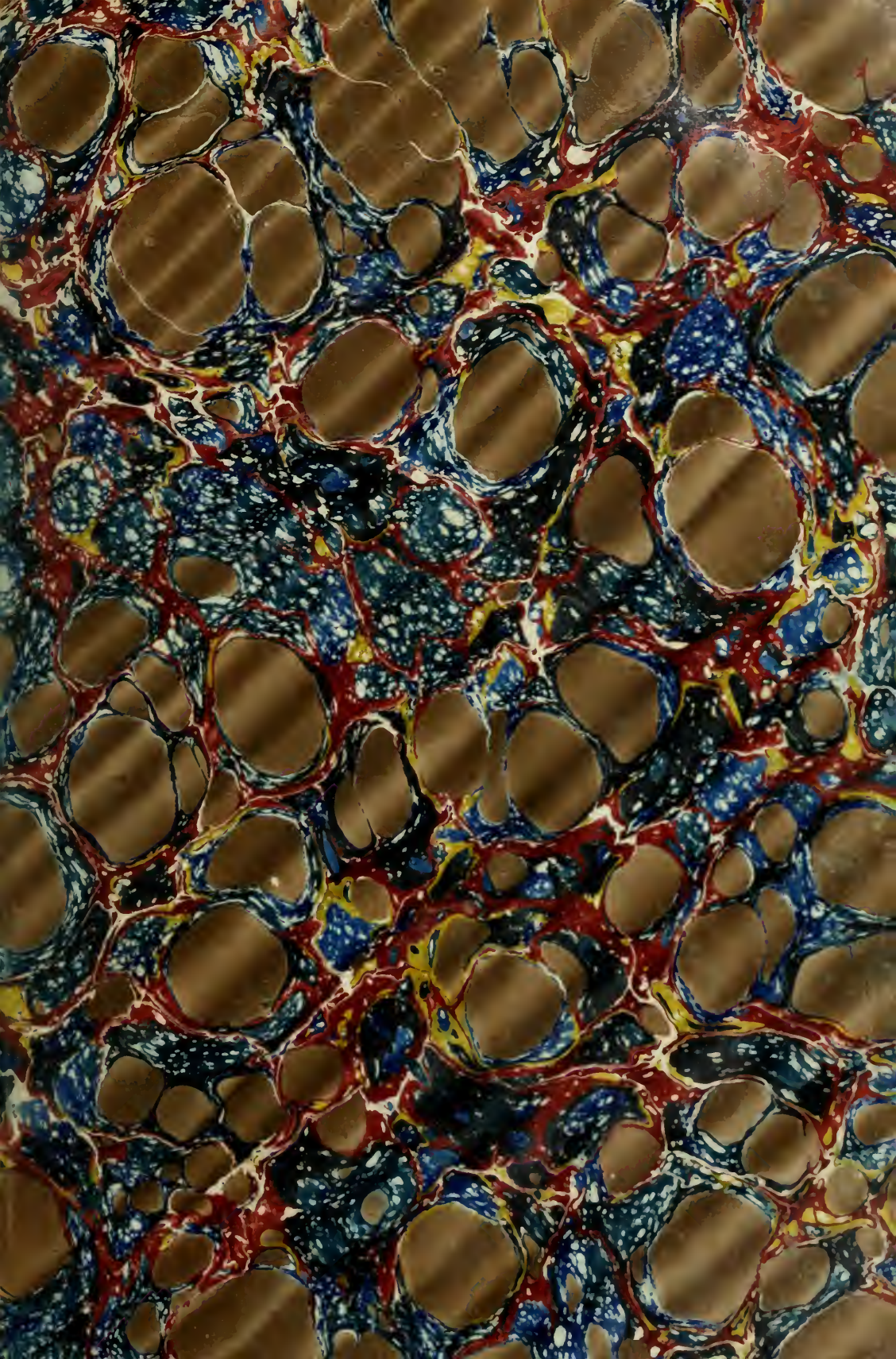

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John Harper

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BY

EUGÈNE SUE.

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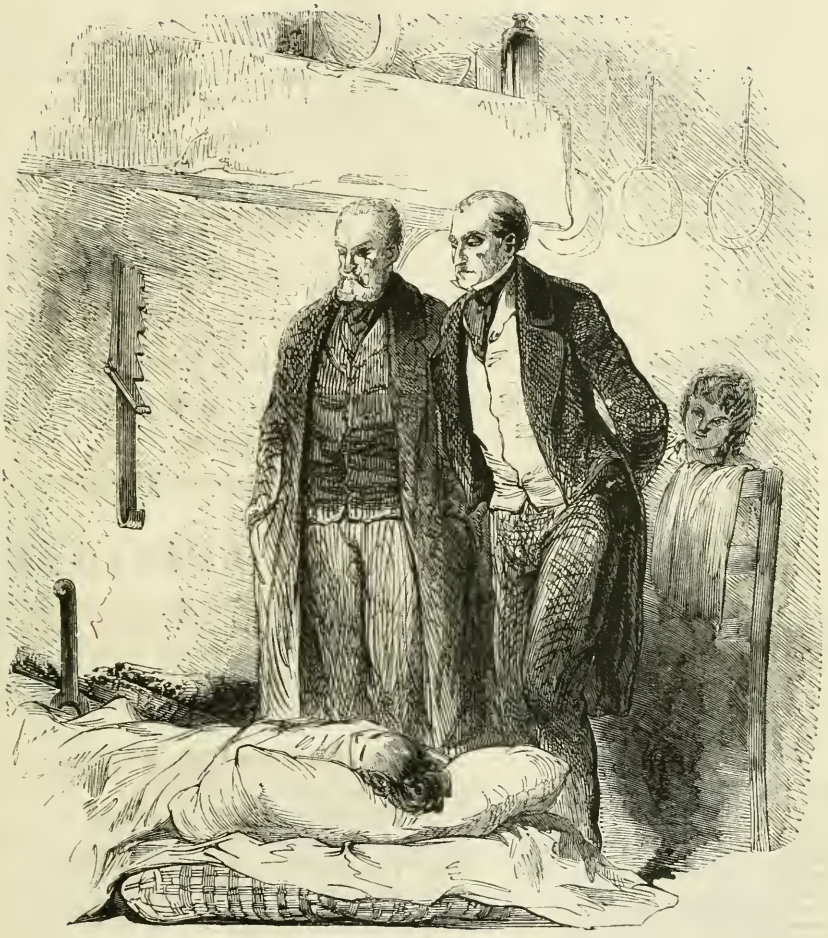


CHAPTER XXXVII.

DOCTOR GRIFFON.

François and Amandine had contrived to convey Fleur-de-Marie near the fire, when M. de Saint-Rémy and Doctor Griffon, who had crossed the river in Nicholas's boat, entered the house. Whilst the children were making the fire burn up, Doctor Griffon bestowed on the young girl his utmost care.

"The poor girl cannot be more than seventeen at most!" exclaimed the count, who was looking on. "What do you think of her, doctor?"

"Her pulse is scarcely perceptible; but, strange to say, the skin of the face is not livid in the subject, as is usually the case in asphyxia from submersion," replied the doctor with professional calmness, and contemplating Fleur-de-Marie with a deeply meditative air.

Doctor Griffon was a tall, thin man, pallid and completely bald, except two tufts of thin black hair, carefully brushed back on the pole, and flattened on the temples. His countenance, wrinkled and furrowed by the fatigues of study, was calm, intelligent, and reflective. Profoundly learned, of great experience, and a skilful practitioner, first surgeon at a civil hospital, where we shall again encounter him, Doctor Griffon had but one defect, that of completely abstracting himself from the patient, and only considering the disease. Young or old, rich or poor, was no matter—he only thought of *medical fact*, more or less remarkable which the *subject* presented. For him there was nothing but *subjects*.

"What a lovely face! How beautiful she is in spite of this frightful paleness!" said M. de Saint-Rémy. "Did you ever see milder, or more expressive features, my dear doctor? And so young—so young!"

"Age is no consequence," said the doctor, abruptly, "no more than the presence of water in the lungs, which was formerly thought fatal. It was a gross error, which the admirable experiments of Goodwin—the famous Goodwin—incontestably detected and exposed."

"But doctor——"

"But it is a fact," replied M. Griffon, absorbed by the love of his art. "To detect the presence of any foreign liquid in the lungs, Goodwin plunged some cats and dogs several times into tubs filled with ink for some seconds, taking them out alive, and then, after a time, dissected the animals. Well, he was convinced from the dissection that the ink had penetrated the lungs, and that the presence of this liquid in the respiratory organs had not caused the death of the subject."

The count knew the doctor was a worthy creature at heart, but that his mad passion for science made him often appear harsh, and cruel.

"Have you any hope?" inquired M. de Saint-Rémy, impatiently.

"The extremities of the subject are very cold," said the doctor; "there is but very slight hope."

"Ah, poor child! To die at that age is indeed terrible!"

"Pupil fixed—dilated!" observed the doctor, impassive, and pushing up the frigid eyelid of Fleur-de-Marie with his forefinger.

"What a singular man!" exclaimed the comte, almost with indignation. "One would suppose you pitiless, and yet I have seen you watch by my bedside for nights together. Had I been your brother, you could not have been more generously devoted to me."

Doctor Griffon, still occupied in doing all that was requisite and possible for Fleur-de-Marie, replied to the comte without looking at him, and with imperturbable phlegm,—

"*Parbleu!* do you think one meets with an intermittent fever so wonderfully complicated as that you had! It was wonderful, my dear friend—astonishing! Stupor, delirium, muscular action of the tendons, syncopes—that *important* fever combined the most varied symptoms. You were, indeed, affected by a partial and momentary attack of paralysis; and, if it had presented nothing else, why your attack was entitled to all

the attention in my power. You presented a magnificent study; and, truth to say, my dear friend, what I desire most in the world is to meet with such another glorious fever. But that is a piece of good fortune that never occurs twice!"

At this moment Martial descended, leaning on the arm of La Louve, who still retained over her wet clothes the plaid cloak which belonged to Calabash. Struck with the paleness of Martial, and remarking his hands covered with dried blood, the comte exclaimed, "Who is this man?"

"*My husband!*" replied La Louve, looking at Martial with an expression of happiness and noble pride impossible to describe.

"You have a good and intrepid wife, sir," said the comte to him. "I saw her save this unfortunate young girl with singular courage."

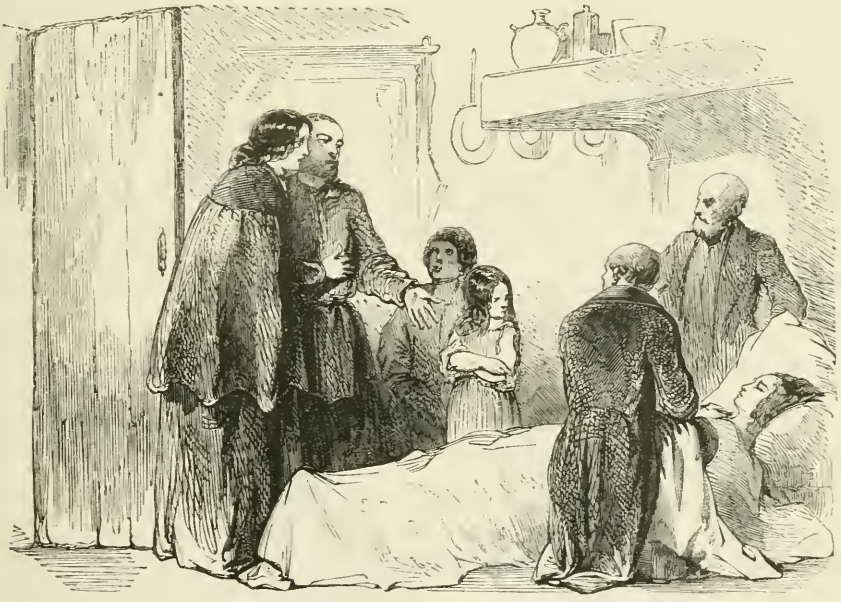
"Yes, sir, *my wife* is good and intrepid," replied Martial, with emphasis, and regarding La Louve with an air at once full of love and tenderness. "Yes, intrepid; for she has also come in time to save my life."

"Your life?" exclaimed the comte.

"Look at his hands—his poor hands!" said La Louve, wiping away the tears which softened the wild brightness of her eyes.

"Horrible!" cried the comte. "See, doctor, how his hands are hacked!"

Doctor Griffon, turning his head slightly, and looking over his shoulder at Martial's hands, said to him, "Open and shut your hand."



Martial did so with considerable pain. The doctor shrugged his shoulders, and continued his attentions to Fleur-de-Marie, saying merely, and as if with regret,—

"There's nothing serious in those cuts—there's no tendon injured. In a week the subject will be able to use his hands again."

"Then, sir, *my husband* will not be crippled?" said La Louve, with gratitude.

The doctor shook his head affirmatively.

"And La Goualeuse will recover—won't she, sir?" inquired La Louve. "Oh, she must live, for I and my husband owe her so much!" Then turning towards Martial, "Poor dear girl! There she is, as I told you—she who will, perhaps, be the cause of our happiness; for it was she who gave me the idea of coming and saying to you all I have said. What a chance that I should save her—and here, too!"

"She is a Providence," said Martial, struck by the beauty of La Goualeuse. "What an angel's face! Oh, she will recover, will she not, doctor?"

"I cannot say," replied the doctor. "But, in the first place, can she remain here? Will she have all necessary attention?"

"Here?" cried La Louve; "why, they commit murder here!"

"Silence—silence!" said Martial.

The comte and the doctor looked at La Louve with surprise.

"This house in the isle has a bad reputation hereabouts, and I am not astonished at it," observed the doctor, in a low tone, to M. de Saint-Rémy.

"You have, then, been the victim of some violence?" observed the comte to Martial. "How did you come by those wounds?"

"They are nothing—nothing, sir. I had a quarrel—a struggle ensued, and I was wounded. But this young peasant girl cannot remain in this house," he added, with a gloomy air. "I cannot remain here myself—nor my wife, nor my brother, nor my sister, whom you see. We are going to leave the isle, never to return to it."

"Oh, how nice!" exclaimed the two children.

"Then what are we to do?" said the doctor, looking at Fleur-de-Marie. "It is impossible to think of conveying the subject to Paris in her present state of prostration. But then my house is quite close at hand, my gardener's wife and her daughter are capital nurses; and since this asphyxia by submersion interests you, my dear Saint-Rémy, why you can watch over the necessary attentions, and I will come and see her every day."

"And you assume the harsh and pitiless man," exclaimed the comte, "when, as your proposal proves, you have one of the noblest hearts in the world!"

"If the subject sinks under it, as is possible, there will be an opportunity for a most interesting dissection, which will allow me to confirm once again Goodwin's assertions."

"How horridly you talk!" cried the comte.

"For those who know how to read, the dead body is a book in which they learn to save the lives of the diseased!" replied Dr. Griffon, stoically.

"At last, then, you do good?" said M. de Saint-Rémy, with bitterness; "and that is important. What consequence is the cause provided that benefit results? Poor child! the more I look at her the more she interests me."

"And well does she deserve it, I can tell you, sir," observed La Louve, with excitement, and approaching him.

"Do you know her?" inquired the comte.

"Do I know her, sir? Why it is to her that I owe the happiness of my life; and I have not done for her half what she has done for me." And La Louve looked passionately towards *her husband*—she no longer called him *her man!*

"And who is she?" asked M. de Saint-Rémy.

"An angel, sir—all that is good in this world. Yes; and although she is dressed as a country girl, there is no merchant's wife, no great lady, who can discourse as well as she can, with her sweet little voice just like music. She is a noble girl, I say—full of courage and goodness."

"By what accident did she fall into the water?"

"I do not know, sir."

"Then she is not a peasant girl?" asked the comte.

"A peasant girl—look at her small white hands, sir!"

"True," observed M. de Saint-Rémy; "what a strange mystery! But her name—her family?"

"Come along," said the doctor, breaking into the conversation; "we must convey the subject into the boat."

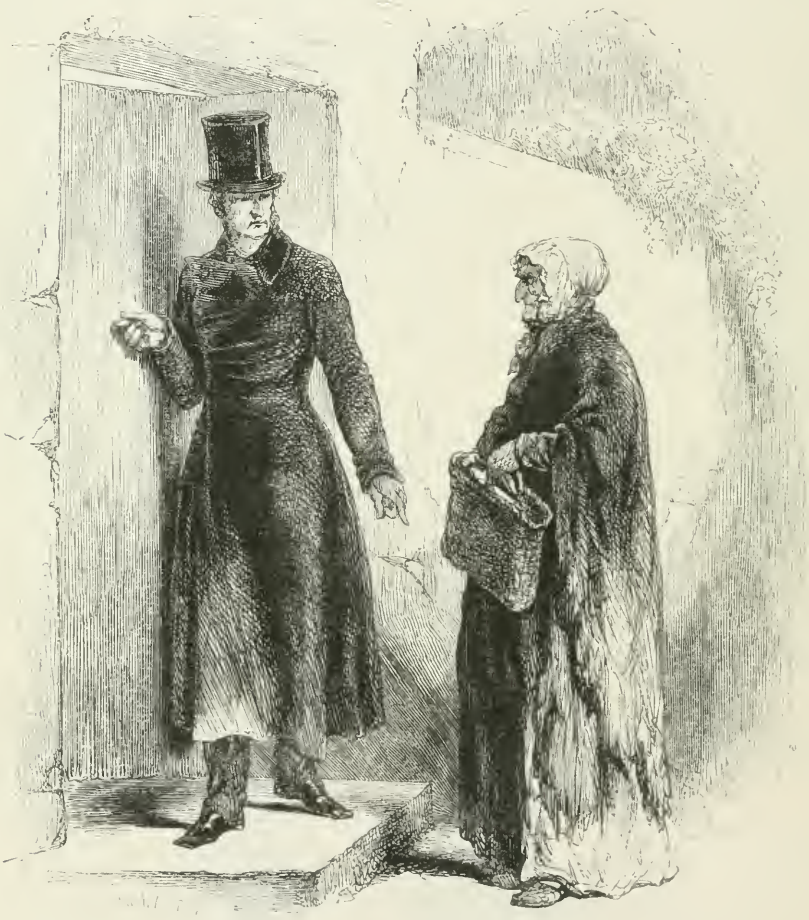
Half-an-hour after this, Fleur-de-Marie, who had not yet recovered her senses, was in the doctor's abode, lying in a good bed, and maternally watched by M. Griffon's gardener's wife, to whom was added La Louve. The doctor promised M. de Saint-Rémy, who was more and more interested in La Goualeuse, to return to see her again in the evening. Martial went to Paris with François and Amandine, La Louve being unwilling to quit Fleur-de-Marie before she had been pronounced out of danger.

The Ile du Ravageur remained deserted. We shall presently find its sinister inhabitants at Bras-Rouge's, where they were to be joined by the Chouette for the murder of the diamond-matcher. In the meantime we will conduct the reader to the rendezvous which Tom, Sarah's brother, had with the horrible hag the Schoolmaster's accomplice.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE PORTRAIT.

Thomas Seyton, the brother of the Countess Sarah Macgregor, was walking impatiently on the boulevards near the Observatory, when he saw the Chouette arrive. The horrible beldame had on a white cap and her usual plaid shawl. The point of a stiletto, as round as a thick swan's



quill, and very sharp, having perforated a hole at the bottom of her large straw basket which she carried on her arm, the extremity of this murderous weapon, which had belonged to the Schoolmaster, might be seen projecting. Thomas Seyton did not perceive that the Chouette was armed.

"It has just struck three by the Luxembourg," said the old woman. "Here I am, like the hand of the clock."

"Come!" replied Thomas Seyton. And preceding her, he crossed some open fields; and turning down a deserted alley near the Rue Cassini, he stopped half way down the lane, which was barred by a turnstile, opened a small door, motioned to the Chouette to follow him; and, after having advanced with her a few steps down a path overgrown by thick trees, he said, "Wait here!" and disappeared.

"That is if you don't keep me on the 'waiting lay' too long," responded the Chouette; "for I must be at Bras Rouge's at five o'clock to meet the Martials, and help *silence* the diamond-matcher. It's very well I have my *gulley* (poniard). Oh, the vagabond, he has got his nose out of window!" added the hag, as she saw the point of the stiletto coming through the seam in the basket. And taking the weapon, which had a wooden handle, from the basket, she replaced it so that it was completely concealed. "This is *fourline's* tool," she continued, "and he has asked me for it so many times to kill the rats who came skipping about him in his cellar. Poor things! they have no one but the old blind man to divert them and keep them company. They ought not to be hurt if they play about a bit; and so I will not let him hurt the dears, and I keep his tool to myself. Besides, I shall soon want it for this woman, perhaps. Thirty thousand francs worth of diamonds—what a 'haul' for each of us! It'll be a good day's work, and not like that of the other day with that old notary whom I thought to squeeze. It was no use to threaten him if he would not 'stand some blunt' that I would lay information that it was his housekeeper who had sent La Goualeuse to me by Tournemine when she was a little brat. Nothing frightened the old brute, he called me an old hag, and shoved me out of doors. Well, well, I'll send an anonymous letter to these people at the farm where Pegriotte was, to inform them that it was the notary who formerly abandoned her to me. Perhaps they know her family; and when she gets out of Saint-Lazare, why the matter will get too hot for that old brute Jacques Ferrand. Some one comes—ah, it is the pale lady who was dressed in men's clothes at the *tapis-franc* of the ogress, and with the tall fellow who just left me, the same that the *fourline* and I robbed by the excavations near Notre-Dame," added the Chouette, as she saw Sarah appear at the extremity of the walk. "Here's another job for me, I see; and this little lady must have something to do with our having carried off La Goualeuse from the farm. If she pays well for another job of work, why that will be 'the ticket.'"

As Sarah approached the Chouette, whom she saw again for the first time since their rencontre at the *tapis-franc*, her countenance expressed the disdain, the disgust, which persons of a certain rank feel when they come in contact with low wretches whom they take as tools or accomplices.

Thomas Seyton, who, until now, had actively served the criminal machinations of his sister, although he considered them as all but futile, had refused any longer to continue this contemptible part, consenting, nevertheless, for the first and last time to put his sister in communication with the Chouette, without himself interfering in the fresh projects they might plan. The countess, unable to win back Rodolph to her by breaking the bonds or the affections which she believed so dear to him, hoped,

as we have seen, to render him the dupe of a base deceit, the success of which might realise the vision of this obstinate, ambitious, and cruel woman. Her design was to persuade Rodolph that their daughter was not dead, and to substitute an orphan for the child.

We know that Jacques Ferrand—having formally refused to participate in this plot in spite of Sarah's menaces—had resolved to make away with Fleur-de-Marie, as much from the fear of the Chouette's disclosure, as from fear of the obstinate persistance of the countess. But the latter had by no means abandoned her design, feeling persuaded that she should corrupt or intimidate the notary when she should be assured of having obtained a young girl capable of filling the character which she desired her to assume.

After a moment's silence Sarah said to the Chouette, "You are adroit, discreet, and resolute?"

"Adroit as a monkey, resolute as a bull-dog, and mute as a fish: such is the Chouette, and such the devil made her; at your service if you want her—and you do," replied the old wretch quickly. "I hope we have managed well with the young country wench who is now in Saint-Lazare for two good months."

"We are not talking of her, but of something else."

"Any thing you please, my handsome lady, provided there's money at the end of what you mean to propose, and then we shall be as right as my fingers."

Sarah could not control a movement of disgust. "You must know," she resumed, "many people in the lower ranks of life—persons who are in misfortune?"

"There are more of them than there are of millionnaires; you may pick and choose. We have plentiful wretchedness in Paris."

"I want to meet with a poor orphan girl, and particularly if she lost her parents young. She must be good-looking, of gentle disposition, and not more than seventeen years of age."

The Chouette gazed at Sarah with amazement.

"Such an orphan girl must be by no means difficult to meet with," continued the countess; "there are so many foundling children?"

"Why, my good lady, you forget La Goualeuse. She is the very thing.

"Who is La Goualeuse?"

"The young thing we carried off from Bouqueval."

"We are not talking of her now, I tell you."

"But hear me, and be sure you pay me well for my advice. You want an orphan girl, as quiet as a lamb, as handsome as daylight, and who is only seventeen, you say?"

"Certainly."

"Well then, take La Goualeuse when she leaves Saint-Lazare; she is the very thing for you, as if we had made her on purpose. For she was about six years of age when that scamp Jacques Ferrand (and it's now ten years ago) gave her to me with a thousand francs, in order to get rid of her—that is to say, it was Tournemine, who is now at the galleys at Rochefort, who brought her to me, saying there was no doubt she was some child they wanted to get rid of or pass off for dead."

"Jacques Ferrand, do you say?" exclaimed Sarah, in a voice so choked that the Chouette receded several paces. "The notary, Jacques Ferrand, gave you this child——and——?" She could not finish, her emotion was too violent; and with her two clasped hands extended towards the Chouette, she trembled convulsively—surprise and joy agitating her features.

"I don't know what it is that makes you so much in earnest, my good lady," replied the old hag; "but it is a very simple story. Ten years ago Tournemine, an old *pal* of mine, said to me, 'Have you a mind to take

charge of a little girl that they want to get out of the way? No matter whether she slips her wind or not. There's a thousand francs for the job, and do what you like with the 'kinchin.'"

"Ten years ago?" cried Sarah.

"Ten years."

"A little fair girl?"

"A little fair girl."

"With blue eyes?"

"Blue eyes—as blue as blue bells."

"And it was she who was at the farm?"

"And we packed her up and carted her off to Saint-Lazare. I must say, though, that I didn't expect to find her—Pegriotte—in the country as I did though."

"Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" exclaimed Sarah, falling on her knees, and elevating her hands and eyes to heaven, "Thy ways are inscrutable, and I bow down before Thy Providence! Oh, if such happiness be possible! But no, I cannot yet believe it; it would be too fortunate! No!" Then rising suddenly she said to the Chouette, who was gazing at her with the utmost astonishment, "Follow me!" And Sarah walked before her with hasty steps.

At the end of the alley she ascended several steps that led by a glass door to a small room sumptuously furnished. At the moment when the Chouette was about to enter, Sarah made a sign to her to remain outside, and then rang the bell violently. A servant appeared.

"I am not at home to any body, and let no one enter here—no one, do you hear?"

The servant bowed and retired. Sarah, for the sake of greater security, pushed to the bolt. The Chouette heard the order given to the servant, and saw Sarah fasten the bolt. The countess then turning towards her, said, "Come in quickly, and shut the door."

The Chouette did as she was bidden.

Hastily opening a secretaire, Sarah took from it an ebony coffer, which she placed on a writing-table in the centre of the room, and beckoned the Chouette towards her. The coffer was filled with small caskets lying one upon the other, and containing splendid jewellery. Sarah was in so much haste to arrive at the bottom of the coffer, that she hastily scattered over the table these jewel-cases, splendidly filled with necklaces, bracelets, tiaras of rubies, emeralds, and diamonds, which sparkled with a thousand fires.

The Chouette was dazzled. She was armed, was alone with the countess; escape was easy—certain. An infernal idea shot through the brain of this monster. But to put this new crime into execution it was necessary to extricate her stiletto from her basket, and approach Sarah without exciting her suspicions.

With the craft of the tiger-cat, who grovels along treacherously towards its prey, the beldame profited by the countess's preoccupation to move imperceptibly round the table which separated her from her victim. The Chouette had already begun her perfidious movement, when she was compelled suddenly to stop short. Sarah took a locket from the bottom of the box, leaned over the table, and handing it to the Chouette with a trembling hand, said,—

"Look at this portrait."

"It is Pegriotte!" exclaimed the Chouette, struck with the strong resemblance; "it is the little girl who was handed to me! I think I see her just as she was when Tournemine brought her to me. That's just like her long curling hair, which I cut off and sold directly, *ma foi!*"

"You recognise her: it was really she? Oh, I conjure you, do not deceive me—do not deceive me!"

"I tell you, my good lady, it is Pegriotte, as if I saw herself there," said the Chouette, trying to draw nearer to Sarah without being remarked. "And even now she is very like this portrait: if you saw her you would be struck by the likeness."

Sarah had not uttered one cry of pain or alarm when she learned that her daughter had been for ten years leading a wretched existence, forsaken as she was. Not one feeling of remorse was there when she reflected that she herself had snatched her away disastrously from the peaceful retreat in which Rodolph had placed her. This unnatural mother did not eagerly question the Chouette with terrible anxiety as to the past life of the child. No! In her heart ambition had long since stifled every sentiment of maternal tenderness. It was not joy at again being restored to a lost daughter that transported her—it was the hope of seeing at length realised the vain dream of her whole existence. Rodolph had felt deeply interested in this unfortunate girl, had protected her without knowing her; what would then be his feelings when he discovered that she was—HIS DAUGHTER? He was free—the countess was a widow! Sarah already saw the sovereign crown sparkling on her brow.

The Chouette, still stealing on with slow steps, had at length reached one end of the table, and had her stiletto perpendicularly in her basket, its handle on a level with the opening, and within her clutch. She was but a step or two from the countess.

"Do you know how to write?" inquired Sarah of her; and pushing from her the casket and gems, she opened a blotting-book, which was by an inkstand.

"No, madam; I do not!" replied the Chouette, at all risks.

"I will write, then, at your dictation. Tell me all the circumstances of the abandonment of this little girl."

And Sarah, sitting in an arm chair before the writing-table, took up a pen, and made a sign to the Chouette to come close to her. The old wretch's one eye sparkled. At last she was standing up, close to the seat on which Sarah was sitting, and, stooping over a table, was preparing to write.

"I will read aloud, and then," said the countess, "you can correct any mistakes."

"Yes, madam," replied the Chouette, narrowly watching every motion of Sarah; and she furtively introduced her hand into her basket, that she might be able to grasp the poniard without being observed.

The countess commenced writing.

"I declare that——"

Then interrupting herself, and turning towards the Chouette, who was at the moment touching the handle of her poniard, Sarah added,—

"At what period was the child brought to you?"

"In the month of February 1827."

"And by whom?" continued Sarah, turning towards the Chouette.

"By Pierre Tournemine, now at the galleys at Rochefort. It was Madame Séraphin, the notary's housekeeper, who brought the young girl to him."

The countess continued writing, and then read aloud,—

"I declare that, in the month of February 1827, a person named——"

The Chouette had drawn the poniard: already had she raised her arm to strike her victim between the shoulders: Sarah turned again. The Chouette, that she might not be off her guard, leaned her right hand, armed as it was, on the back of Sarah's arm-chair, and then stooped towards her, as if in attitude to reply to her question.

"Tell me again the name of the man who handed the child to you?" said the countess.

"Pierre Tournemine," repeated Sarah, as she wrote it down, "at this time at the galleys of Rochefort, brought me a child, which had been confided to him by the housekeeper of——"

The countess could not finish. The Chouette having got rid of her basket by allowing it to slide from her arm on to the floor, threw herself on the countess with equal fury and rapidity; and having grasped the back of her neck with her left hand, forced her face down on the table, and then, with her right hand, drove the stiletto in between her two shoulders.

This atrocious assassination was so promptly effected that the countess did not utter a cry—a moan. Still sitting, she remained with her head and the front of her body on the table. Her pen fell from her fingers.

"Just the very blow which *fourline* gave the little old man in the Rue du Roule!" said the monster. "One more who will never wag tongue again! Her account is settled!" And the Chouette, gathering up the

jewels together, huddled them into her basket, not perceiving that her victim still breathed.

The murder and robbery effected, the horrid old devil opened the glass door, ran swiftly along the tree-covered path, went out by the small side-door, and reached the lone tract of ground. Near the Observatory she took a hackney-coach, which drove her to Bras-Rouge's in the Champs Elysées.

The Widow Martial, Nicholas, Calabash, and Barbillon, had, as we know, an appointment with the Chouette in this den of infamy, in order to rob and murder the diamond-matcher.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE AGENT OF SAFETY.

The reader already knows the *Bleeding Heart* in the Champs Elysées, near the Court de la Reine, in one of the deep ditches which, a few years since, were close to this promenade. The inhabitants of the Isle du Ravageur had not yet arrived.

After the departure of Bradamanti, who had, as we know, accompanied Madame d'Harville's stepmother into Normandy, Tortillard had returned to his father. Placed as a sentinel at the top of the staircase, the little cripple was to announce the arrival of the Martials by a certain cry, Bras-

Rouge being at this moment in secret conference with an *agent-de-sûreté* named Narcisse Borel, whom the reader may perchance remember to have seen at the *tapis-franc* of the Ogress, when he came there to arrest two miscreants accused of murder.

This agent, a man about forty years of age, was thickset and powerful, with a high colour, a keen, quick eye, his face entirely shaven, in order that he might better assume the various disguises necessary for his dangerous expeditions; for it was frequently necessary for him to unite the transformations of the actor to the courage and energy of the soldier, in order to seize on certain ruffians with whom he had to contend in cunning and determination. Narcisse Borel was, in a word, one of the most useful and most active instruments of that Providence on a small scale which is modestly and commonly termed *the Police.*

* * * * * *

We will return to the conversation between Narcisse Borel and Bras-Rouge, which appeared to be very animated.

"Yes," said the agent of safety; "you are accused of profiting by your double-faced position, and of taking with impunity a share in the booty of a band of most dangerous malefactors, and then giving false information respecting them to the protective police. Take care, Bras-Rouge; for if you are detected no mercy will be shewn you!"

"Alas! I know I am accused of this; and it is very distressing for me, my good M. Narcisse," replied Bras-Rouge, whilst his weasel's face assumed a hypocritical air of vexation. "But I hope that this day will at last do me justice, and my good faith will be recognised."

"That remains to be proved."

"How can I be distrusted—have I not given proofs? Was it I or was it not who, at the time, enabled you to apprehend Ambroise Martial, one of the most dangerous malefactors in Paris, in the very fact?"

"All this is very fine and good; but Ambroise was warned they were going to arrest him, and if I had not been earlier than the hour you told me of, he would have escaped."

"Do you think me capable, M. Narcisse, of having secretly told him of your coming?"

"I only know that I received from the scoundrel a pistol-shot aimed full at me, but which, fortunately, only grazed my arm."

"Why, to be sure, M. Narcisse, in your profession you must be occasionally exposed to such mistakes!"

"Ah, you call these mistakes, eh?"

"Certainly; for, no doubt, the wicked fellow intended to lodge the ball in your body."

"In the arm, body, or head, no matter, I don't complain of that; every profession has its disagreeables."

"And its pleasures, too, M. Narcisse—and its pleasures. For instance, when a man, as cunning, as skilful, and as courageous as you, has been for a long time on the track of a gang of villains, whom he follows from quarter to quarter, from lurking-place to lurking-place, with a good bloodhound like your poor servant to command, Bras-Rouge, and, finally, marks them down and comes upon them in a trap from which not one of them can escape, why, then, you must say, M. Narcisse, that there is

great pleasure in it—the joy of a sportsman—not including the service he renders to justice!" added the host of the *Bleeding Heart*, with a grave air.

"I should fully agree with you if the bloodhound were faithful: but I fear it is not."

"Ah, M. Narcisse, you think——"

"I think that, instead of putting us on the track you amuse yourself with setting us on a false scent, and abuse the confidence placed in you. Every day you promise to aid us to lay hands on the gang, and that day never arrives."

"What if the day arrives to-day, M. Narcisse, as I am sure it will? What if I bring together in a parcel Barbillon, Nicholas Martial, the widow, her daughter, and the Chouette? Will that or will it not be a good sweep of the net? Will you then mistrust me any longer?"

"No; and you will have rendered a real service; for there are very strong presumptive facts against this gang: suspicions almost assured, but, unfortunately, no proofs."

"So, then, a small fag-end of actual crime, which would allow of their being apprehended, would help amazingly to unravel the difficult skein—eh, M. Narcisse?"

"Most decidedly. And you assure me that there has not been the slightest incitement on your part towards the *coup* which they are now going to attempt?"

"No, on my honour! It is the Chouette, who came to me to propose

inveigling the diamond-matcher here, when that infernal hag learned from my son that Morel the lapidary, who lives in the Rue du Temple, was a workman in real stones, and not in false, and that Mother Mathieu had

frequently considerable value about her person, I acceded to the proposition, and suggested to the Chouette that the Martials and Barbillon should join her, so that I might be able to put the whole party into your hands."

"And the Schoolmaster—that fellow who is so dangerous, so powerful, and so ferocious, and who was always with the Chouette: one of the frequenters of the *tapis franc?*"

"The Schoolmaster?" said Bras Rouge, feigning astonishment.

"Yes, a convict escaped from the galleys at Rochefort, Anselm Duresnel by name, sentenced for life. We know now that he disfigured himself on purpose, that he might not be recognised. Have you no trace of him?"

"None," replied Bras-Rouge, boldly, for he had his reasons for the lie, the Schoolmaster being at this very moment shut up in one of the cellars of the cabaret.

"There is every reason to believe that the Schoolmaster is the author of fresh murders. He would be an important capture."

"No one knows what has become of him for the last six weeks."

"And that's the reason you are reproached with having lost all trace of him."

"Always reproaches, M. Narcisse—always!"

"Not for want of ample cause! And how goes on the smuggling?"

"Is it not necessary that I should know something of all kinds of persons—smugglers as well as others—in order to put you on the scent? I disclosed to you that pipe to introduce liquids, established outside the Barrière du Trône, and coming into a house in the street."

"I know that," said Narcisse, interrupting Bras-Rouge; "but for one that you denounce, you allow ten to escape, and continue your traffic with impunity. I am sure you eat at two mangers, as the saying is."

"Oh, M. Narcisse, I am incapable of an appetite so dishonest!"

"That is not all: in the Rue du Temple, No. 17, there lives a woman named Burette, who lends money on deposit, who, they say, is a private receiver of stolen goods on your account."

"What would you have me do, M. Narcisse? the world is so slanderous—says so many wicked things? Once again, I say, it is necessary for me to mix with as many rogues as possible, that I even seem one of themselves—so much the worse for them—in order that they may not have any suspicions; but it cuts me to the heart to imitate them—cuts me to the heart. I must, indeed, be devoted to the service, to give myself up to such a thing as that."

"Poor, dear man! I pity you with all my soul!"

"You are laughing at me, M. Narcisse; but, if that was believed, why has there not been a search made at Mother Burette's and in my house?"

"You know well enough—that we might not alarm the ruffians, whom, for so long a time, you have promised to deliver into our hands."

"And I am now about to deliver them, M. Narcisse: before an hour you will have them all handcuffed, and that without much trouble, for there are three women. As to Barbillon and Nicholas Martial, they are as savage as tigers, but as cowardly as pullets."

"Tigers or pullets," said Narcisse, half opening his long frock-coat, and shewing the butts of two pistols in the pockets of his trousers, "I have wherewithal here for them."

"You will do well to have two of your men with you, M. Narcisse. When they see themselves caught, the most cowardly sometimes shew fight."

"I shall station two of my men in the small parlour at the entrance, by the side of the room into which you are to introduce the jewel-matcher. At the first cry, I shall appear at one door, and my two men at the other."

"You must be speedy then, for I expect the gang here every moment, M. Narcisse."

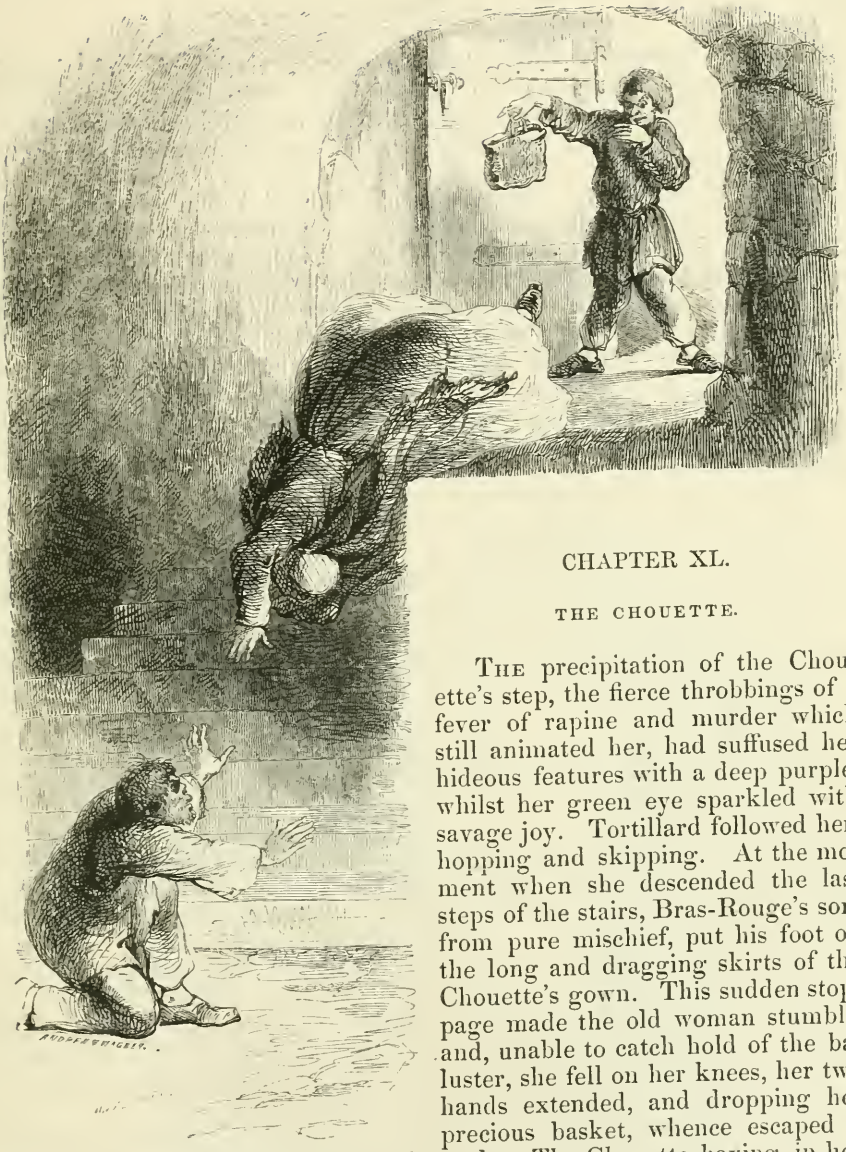
"Very well, I will go at once and place my men, provided that all this is not another humbug."

The conversation was cut short by the peculiar whistle intended as a signal. Bras-Rouge looked out of a window to see whom it was that Tortillard announced.

"Ah, ha! it is the Chouette already. Well, do you believe me now, M. Narcisse?"

"Why, this looks something like; but it is not all. But we shall see. And now to station my men."

And the agent of safety disappeared at a side door.



CHAPTER XL.

THE CHOUETTE.

The precipitation of the Chouette's step, the fierce throbbings of a fever of rapine and murder which still animated her, had suffused her hideous features with a deep purple, whilst her green eye sparkled with savage joy. Tortillard followed her, hopping and skipping. At the moment when she descended the last steps of the stairs, Bras-Rouge's son, from pure mischief, put his foot on the long and dragging skirts of the Chouette's gown. This sudden stoppage made the old woman stumble, and, unable to catch hold of the baluster, she fell on her knees, her two hands extended, and dropping her precious basket, whence escaped a gold bracelet set with emeralds and pearls. The Chouette having, in her fall, somewhat excoriated her fingers, picked up the bracelet, which had not escaped the keen sight of Tortillard, and, recovering her feet, turned furiously to the little cripple, who approached her with a hypocritical air, saying to her,—

"Oh, dear me! did your foot slip?"

Without making any reply, the Chouette seized Tortillard by the hair, and, stooping to a level with his cheek, she bit it with such fury that the blood spirted out beneath her teeth. Strange, however, Tortillard, in spite of his usual vindictiveness, in spite of feeling such intense pain, did

not utter a murmur or a cry. He only wiped his bleeding cheek, and said, with a forced laugh,—

"I hope next time you will not kiss me so hard—eh, La Chouette?"

"Wicked little brat! why did you tread on my gown on purpose to make me fall?"

"Me? oh! how could you think so? I swear I didn't do it on purpose, my dear Chouette! Don't think your little Tortillard would do you any harm; he loves you too well for that. You should never beat him, or scold him, or bite him, for he is as fond of you as if he were a poor little dog, and you were his mistress!" said the boy, in a gentle and insinuating tone.

Deceived by Tortillard's hypocrisy, the Chouette believed him, and replied,—

"Well, well, if I was wrong to bite you, why, let it go for all the other times you have deserved it, you little villain! But, *vive la joie!* to-day I bear no malice. Where is your old rogue of a father?"

"In the house. Shall I go and find him for you?"

"No; are the Martials here?"

"Not yet."

"Then I have time to go down and visit *fourline.* I want to speak to old No-Eyes."

"Will you go into the Schoolmaster's cellar?" inquired Tortillard, scarcely concealing his diabolical delight.

"What's that to you?"

"To me?"

"Yes, you ask me the question with such an odd air."

"Because I was thinking of something odd."

"What?"

"Why, that you ought, at least, to have brought him a pack of cards to pass away his time," replied Tortillard, with a cunning look; "that would divert him a little: now he has nothing to play at but not to be bitten by the rats; and he always wins at that game, and after a while it becomes tiresome."

The Chouette laughed heartily at Tortillard's wit, and said to the cripple,—

"Love of a baby boy to his mammy! I do not know any chap who has more vice than this scamp. Go and get me a candle, that you may light me down to see *fourline*, and you can help me to open his door. You know that I can hardly push it by myself."

"Well, no, it is so very dark in the cellar," said Tortillard, shaking his head.

"What! what! you who are as wicked as a devil to be a coward? I like to see that, indeed! Go directly, and tell your father that I shall be with him almost immediately; that I am with *fourline*; and that we are talking of putting up the banns for our marriage. He! he! he!" added the disgusting wretch, grinning. "So make haste, and you shall be bridesman, and, if you are a good boy, you shall have my garter."

Tortillard went, with a sulky air, to fetch a light. Whilst she was waiting for him, the Chouette, perfectly intoxicated with the success of her robbery, put her hand into her basket to feel the precious jewels it

enclosed. It was for the purpose of temporarily concealing this treasure that she desired to descend into the Schoolmaster's cellar, and not, according to her habit, to enjoy the torments of her new victim.

We will presently explain why, with Bras-Rouge's connivance, the Chouette had immured the Schoolmaster in the very subterranean cave into which this miscreant had formerly precipitated Rodolph.

Tortillard, holding a light, now appeared at the door of the cabaret. The Chouette followed him into the lower room, in which opened the trap with the folding-doors, with which we are already acquainted. Bras-Rouge's son, sheltering the light in the hollow of his hand, and preceding the old woman, slowly descended a stone staircase, which led to a sharp declivity, at the end of which was the thick door of the cellar which had so nearly proved Rodolph's grave. When he reached the bottom of the staircase, Tortillard pretended to hesitate in following the Chouette.

" Well, now, you little vagabond! go on," she said.

" Why, it is so dark; and you go so fast, Chouette! and, indeed, I'd rather go back again, and leave you the light."

"And then, foolish imp! how am I to open the cellar-door by myself? Will you come on?"

"No, I am so frightened!"

"If I begin with you! mind ——"

"If you threaten me, I'll go back again!" and Tortillard retreated several paces.

"Well, listen to me, now,—be a good boy," said the Chouette, repressing her anger, "and I'll give you something."

"Well, what?" said Tortillard, coming up to her. "Speak to me so always, and I'll do any thing you wish me, Mother Chouette."

"Come, come, I'm in a hurry!"

"Yes; but promise me that I may have some fun with the Schoolmaster?"

"Another time; I haven't time to-day."

"Only a little bit—just let me tease him for five minutes?"

"Another time: I tell you that I want to return upstairs as quickly as possible."

"Why, then, do you want to open the door of his *apartment?*"

"That's no affair of yours. Come, now, have done with this. Perhaps the Martials are come by this time, and I must have some talk with them. So be a good boy, and you sha'n't be sorry for it. Come along."

"I must love you very much, Chouette, for you make me do just what you like," said Tortillard, slowly advancing.

The dim, wavering light of the candle, which but imperfectly lighted this gloomy way, reflected the black profile of this hideous brat on the slimy walls, which were full of crevices and reeking with damp. At the end of this passage, through the half obscurity, might be seen the low and crumbling arch of the entrance to the cellar, the thick door strengthened with iron bars, and, standing out in the shade, the red shawl and white cap of the Chouette.

By the united exertions of the two, the door opened harshly on its rusty hinges: a puff of humid vapour escaped from this den, as dark as midnight. The light, placed on the ground, threw its faint beams on the first steps of the stone staircase, the bottom of which was completely lost in the darkness. A cry, or, rather, a savage roar, came from the depths of the cave.

"Ah, there's *fourline* wishing his mamma good morning!" said the Chouette, with a sneer.

And she descended several steps, in order to conceal her basket in some hole.

"I'm hungry!" exclaimed the Schoolmaster, in a voice that shook with rage: "do you wish to kill me like a mad dog?"

"What's the deary lovey hungry?" said the Chouette, with a laugh of mockery; "then smell its thumb."

There was a sound like that of a chain twisted violently; then a groan of mute, repressed passion.

"Take care! take care! or you'll have a bump in your leg, as you had at Bouqueval farm, poor dear pa!" said Tortillard.

"He's right, the boy is—keep yourself quiet, *fourline*," continued the hag; "the ring and chain are solid, old No-Eyes, for they came from

Father Micou's, and he sells nothing but the best goods. It is your fault, too; why did you allow yourself to be bound whilst you were asleep? We only had then to put the ring and chain in this place, and bring you down here in the cool, to preserve you, old darling."

"That's a pity! he'll grow mouldy," said Tortillard.

Again the clank of the chain was heard.

"He! he! *fourline!* why he's dancing like a cockchafer tied by the claw," said the beldam, "I think I see him!"

"Cockchafer! cockchafer! fly away home! fly! fly! fly! your husband is *the Schoolmaster!*" sung Tortillard.

This increased the Chouette's hilarity. Having deposited her basket in a hole formed by the lowering of the wall of the staircase, she stood erect, and said,—

"You see, *fourline*——"

"He don't see," said Tortillard.

"The brat's right. Will you hear, *fourline?* There was no occasion when we came away from the farm, to be such a booby as to turn compassionate, and prevent me from marking Pegriotte's face with my vitriol; and then, too, you talked of your conscience, which was getting troubled. I saw you were growing lily-livered, and meant to come the *honest dodge;* and so, some of these odd-come-shortlies, you would have turned *nose* (informer), and have *made a meal* of us, old No-Eyes; and then——"

"Then old No-Eyes will make a meal of you, for he is hungry, Chouette," said Tortillard, suddenly, and with all his strength, pushing the old woman by her back.

The Chouette fell forward with a horrible imprecation. She might have been distinctly heard as she rolled from the top to the bottom of the staircase.

"Bump, bump, bump, bump! There's the Chouette for you—there she is! Why don't you jump upon her, old buffer?" added Tortillard.

Then, seizing the basket from under the stone where he had seen the old woman place it, he scampered up the stairs, exclaiming, with a shout of savage joy,—

"Here's a pull worth more than that you had before—eh, Chouette? This time you won't bite me till the blood comes—eh? Ah, you thought I bore no spite—much obliged—my cheek bleeds still!"

"Oh, I have her! I have her!" cried the Schoolmaster, from the depth of the cave.

"If you have her, old lad, I cry snacks," said Tortillard, with a laugh.

And he stopped on the top step of the stairs.

"Help!" shrieked the Chouette, in a strangling voice.

"Thanks, Tortillard!" said the Schoolmaster, "thanks! and, to reward you, you shall hear the night-bird (Chouette) shriek! Listen, boy—listen to the bird of death."

"Bravo! here I am in the dress-boxes!" said Tortillard, seating himself on the top of the stairs.

As he said this, he raised the light to endeavour to see the fearful scene which was going on in the depths of the cavern; but the darkness was too thick, so faint a light could not disperse it: Bras-Rouge's son could not see any thing. The struggle with the Schoolmaster and the

Chouette was mute, deadly, without a word, without a cry; only, from time to time, was heard the hard breathing, or the stifled groan, which always accompanies violent and desperate efforts. Tortillard, seated on the step, began to stamp his feet with that cadence peculiar to an audience impatient to see the beginning of a play; then he uttered the cry so familiar to the frequenters of the gallery of the minor theatres:—

"Music! music! play up! Up with the curtain!"

"Oh, now I have hold of you, as I desired," murmured the Schoolmaster, from the recess of the cellar; "and you were going ——"

A desperate movement of the Chouette interrupted him; she struggled with all the energy which the fear of death inspires.

"Louder! can't hear!" bawled Tortillard.

"It is in vain you try to gnaw my hand, I will hold you as I like,"

said the Schoolmaster. Then, having, no doubt, succeeded in keeping the Chouette down, he added, "That's it! now listen ——"

"Tortillard, call your father!" shrieked the Chouette, with a faltering, exhausted voice. "Help! help!"

"Turn her out, the old thing! she won't let us hear," said the little cripple, with a shout of laughter; "put her out!"

The Chouette's cries were not audible from this cavern, low as it was. The wretched creature, seeing that there was no chance of help from Bras-Rouge's son, resolved to try a last effort.

"Tortillard, go and fetch help, and I will give you my basket; it is full of jewels. There it is, under a stone."

"How generous! thank ye, madame. Why, haven't I got it already? Hark! don't you hear how it rattles?" said Tortillard, shaking it. "But now, if you'll give us half a pound of gingerbread nuts, I'll go and fetch pa."

"Have pity on me, and I will ——"

The Chouette was unable to conclude. Again there was a profound silence. The little cripple again began to beat time on the stone staircase on which he was seated, accompanying the noise of his feet with the repeated cry,—

"Why don't you begin? Up with the curtain! Music! music!"

"In this way, Chouette, you can no longer disturb me with your cries," said the Schoolmaster, after a few minutes, during which he had, no doubt, gagged the old woman. "You know very well," he continued, in a slow, hollow voice, "that I do not wish to end this all at once: torture for torture! You have made me suffer enough, and I must speak at length, to you before I kill you—yes, at length. It will be very terrible for you—agonising!"

"Come, no stuff and nonsense, old parson," said Tortillard, raising

himself half up from his seat; "punish her, but don't do her any harm. You say you'll kill her—that's only a hum: I am very fond of my Chouette; I have only lent her to you, and you must give her back again. Don't spoil her—I won't have my Chouette spoiled—if you do, I'll go and fetch pa!"

"Be quiet, and she shall only have what she deserves—a profitable lesson," said the Schoolmaster, in order to assure Tortillard, and for fear the cripple should go and fetch assistance.

"All right! bravo! now the play's going to begin!" said Bras-Rouge's son, who did not seriously believe that the Schoolmaster intended to kill the Chouette.

"Let us discourse a little, Chouette," continued the Schoolmaster, in a calm voice. "In the first place, you see,—since that dream at the Bouqueval farm, which brought all my crimes before my eyes—since that dream, which did all but drive me mad—which will drive me mad,—for, in my solitude—in the deep isolation in which I live, all my thoughts dwell on this dream, in spite of myself,—a strange change has come over me—yes, I have a horror of my past ferocity. In the first place, I would not allow you to make a martyr of La Goualeuse, though that was nothing. Chaining me here in the cellar, making me suffer from cold and hunger, and detaining me for your wicked suggestions—you have left me to all the fear of my own reflections. Oh, you do not know what it is to be left alone—always alone—with a dark veil over your eyes, as the pitiless man said who punished me. Oh, it is horrid! it was in this very cavern that I flung him, in order to kill him; and this cavern is the place of my punishment, it may be my grave. I repeat that this is horrid! All that that man predicted to me has come to pass: he said to me, 'You have abused your strength—you will be the plaything, the sport of the most weak.' And it has been so. He said to me, 'Henceforward separated from the exterior world, face to face with the eternal remembrance of your crimes, one day you will repent those crimes.' And that day has come: the loneliness has purified me; I could not have believed it possible. Another proof that I am perhaps less wicked than formerly, is that I feel inexpressible joy in holding you here, monster! not to avenge myself, but to avenge your victims,—yes, I shall have accomplished a duty when, with my own hands, I shall have punished my accomplice. A voice says to me, that, if you had fallen into my power earlier, much blood, much blood would have been spared. I have now a horror of my past murders; and yet, is it not strange? it is without fear, it is even with security, that I am now about to perpetrate on you a fearful murder, with most fearful refinements. Say, say! do you understand that?"

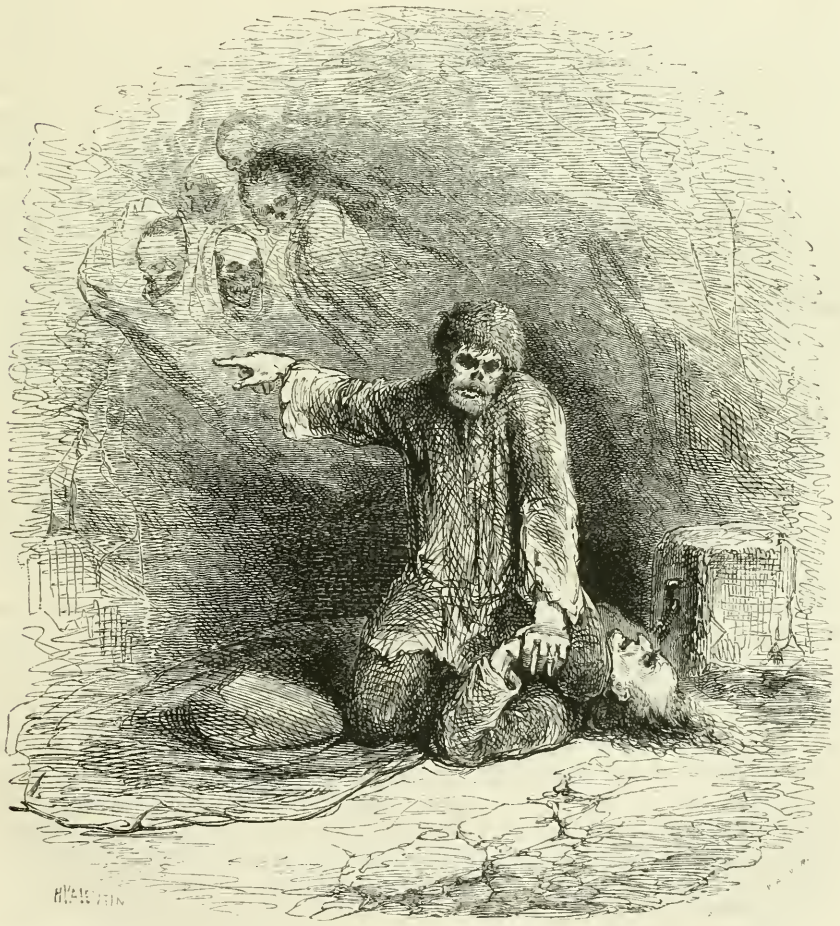
"Bravo! well played, old No-Eyes! He gets on," exclaimed Tortillard, applauding. "It is really something to laugh at."

"To laugh at?" continued the Schoolmaster, in a hollow voice. "Keep still, Chouette: I must complete my explanation as to how I gradually came to repentance. This revelation will be hateful to you, heart of stone! and will prove to you also how remorseless I ought to be in the vengeance which I should wreak on you in the name of our victims. I must be quick. My delight at grasping you thus makes my blood throb in my veins—my temples beat with violence, just as when, by thinking

of my dream, my reason wanders. Perhaps one of my crises will come on; but I shall have time to make the approaches of death frightful to you by compelling you to hear me."

"At him, Chouette!" cried Tortillard, "at him! and reply boldly! Why you don't know your part. Tell the 'old one' to prompt you, my worthy elderly damsel."

"It is useless for you to struggle and bite me," said the Schoolmaster, after another pause. "You shall not escape me—you have bitten my fingers to the bone; but I will pull your tongue out, if you stir. Let us continue our discourse. When I have been alone—alone in the night and silence—I have begun to experience fits of furious, impotent rage; and, for the first time, my senses wandered. Oh! though I was awake, I again dreamed the dream—you know—the dream. The little old man in the Rue du Roule, the drowned woman, the cattle-dealer, and you—soaring over these phantoms! I tell you it was horrible! I am blind,



and my thoughts assume a form, a body, in order to represent to me incessantly, and in a visible, palpable manner, the features of my victims. I should not have dreamed this fearful vision, had not my mind, continually absorbed by the remembrance of my past crimes, been troubled with the same fantasies. Unquestionably, when one is deprived of sight, the ideas that beset us form themselves into images in the brain. Yet sometimes, by dint of viewing them with resigned terror, it would appear, that these menacing spectres have pity on me—they grow dim—fade away—vanish. Then I feel myself awakened from my horrid dream, but so weak—cast down—prostrated—that—would you believe it? ah, how you will laugh, Chouette!—that I *weep!* Do you hear?—I weep! You don't laugh? Laugh! laugh! laugh, I say!"

The Chouette gave a dull and stifled groan.

"Louder!" said Tortillard; "can't hear!"

"Yes," continued the Schoolmaster, "I weep, for I suffer and rage in vain. I say to myself, 'To-morrow, next day, for ever, I shall be a prey to the same attacks of delirium and gloomy desolation.' What a life! oh, what a life! and I would not choose death rather than be buried alive in this abyss which incessantly pervades my thoughts! Blind, alone, and a prisoner,—what can relieve me from my remorse? Nothing! nothing! When the phantasies disappear for a moment, and do not pass and repass the black veil constantly before my eyes, there are other tortures—other overwhelming reflections: I say to myself, 'If I had remained an honest man, I should be at this moment free, tranquil, happy, beloved and honoured by my connexions, instead of being blind and chained in this dungeon at the mercy of my accomplices.' Alas! the regret of happiness lost from crime is the first step towards repentance; and when to repentance is joined an expiation of fearful severity—an expiation which changes life into a long, sleepless night, filled with avenging hallucinations or despairing reflections, perhaps then man's pardon succeeds to remorse and expiation."

"I say, old chap," exclaimed Tortillard, "you are borrowing a bit from M. Moissard's part! Come, no cribbing—gammon!"

The Schoolmaster did not hear Bras-Rouge's son.

"You are astonished to hear me speak thus, Chouette? If I had continued to imbrue myself either in bloody crimes or the fierce drunkenness of the life of the galleys, this salutary change would never have come over me I know full well. But alone, blind, stung with remorse, which eats into me, of what else could I think? Of new crimes?—how to commit them? Escape?—how to escape? And, if I escaped, whither should I go? what should I do with my liberty? No; I must henceforth live in eternal night, between the anguish of repentance and the fear of formidable apparitions which pursue me. Sometimes, however, a faint ray of hope comes to lighten the depth of my darkness—a moment of calm succeeds to my torments,—yes, for sometimes I am able to drive away the spectres which beset me by opposing to them the recollections of a honest and peaceable past, by ascending in thought to my youthful days—to my hours of infancy. Happily, the greatest wretches have, at least, some years of peace and innocence to oppose to their criminal and blood-stained years. None are born wicked; the most infamous have

had the lovely candour of infancy—have tasted the sweet joys of that delightful age. And thus, I again say, I sometimes find a bitter consolation in saying to myself, 'I am, at this hour, doomed to universal execration, but there was a time when I was beloved, protected, because I was inoffensive and good. Alas! I must, indeed, take refuge in the past, when I can, for it is there only that I can find calm."

As he uttered these last words, the tones of the Schoolmaster lost their harshness: this man of iron appeared deeply moved, and he added,—

"But now the salutary influence of these thoughts is such that my fury is appeased: courage, power will fail me to punish you. No, it is not I who will shed your blood."

"Well said, old buck! So, you see, Chouette, it was only a *lark*," cried Tortillard, applauding.

"No, it is not I who will shed your blood," continued the Schoolmaster; "it would be a murder, excusable perhaps, but still a murder; and I have enough with three spectres: and then—who knows?—perhaps one day you will repent also?"

And, as he spake thus, the Schoolmaster had mechanically given the Chouette some liberty of movement. She took advantage of it to seize the stiletto which she had thrust into her stays after Sarah's murder, and aimed a violent blow with this weapon at the ruffian, in order to disengage herself from him. He uttered a cry of extreme pain. The ferocity of his hatred, his vengeance, his rage, his bloody instincts, suddenly aroused and exasperated by this attack, now all burst forth suddenly, terribly, and carried with it his reason, already so strongly shaken by so many shocks.

"Ah, viper, I feel your teeth!" he exclaimed, in a voice that shook with passion; and seizing, with all his might, the Chouette, who had thought thus to escape him. "You are in this dungeon, then?" he added, with an air of madness; "but I will crush the viper or screech-owl. No doubt you were waiting for the coming of the phantoms. Yes! for the blood beats in my temples—my ears ring—my head turns—as when they are about to appear. Yes! I was not deceived: here they are—they advance from the depths of darkness—they advance! How pale they are! and their blood, how it flows—red and smoking! It frightens you—you struggle. Well, be still, you shall not see the phantoms—no, you shall not see them. I have pity on you; I will make you blind. You shall be, like me—EYELESS!"

Here the Schoolmaster paused. The Chouette uttered a cry so horrible, that Tortillard, alarmed, bounded off the step, and stood up. The horrid shrieks of the Chouette served to place the copestone on the fury of the Schoolmaster.

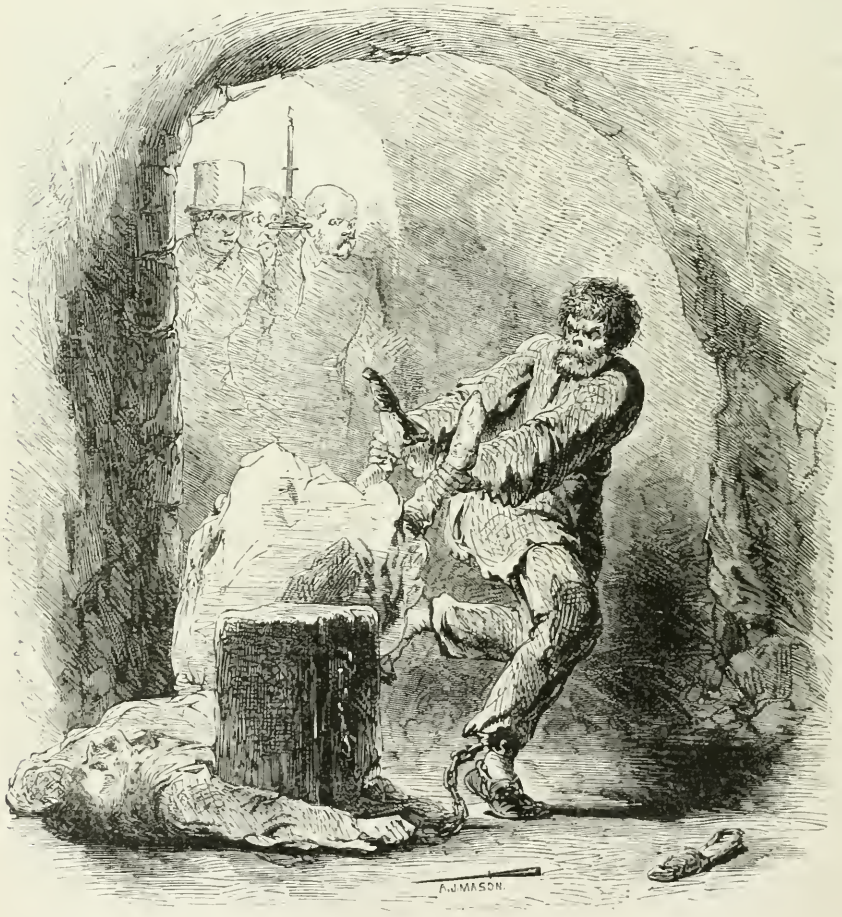
"Sing," he said, in a low voice,—"sing, Chouette—night-bird!—sing your song of death! You are happy; you do not see three phantoms of those we have assassinated—the little old man in the Rue du Roule—the drowned woman—the cattle-dealer. I see them; they approach—they touch me. Ah, so cold—so cold! Ah!"

The last gleam of sense of this unhappy wretch was lost in this cry of condemnation. He could no longer reason, but acted and roared like a wild beast, and only obeyed the savage instinct of destruction for destruction. A hurried trampling was now heard, interrupted frequently at

intervals with a heavy sound, which appeared like a box of bones bounding against a stone, upon which it was intended to be broken. Sharp, convulsive shrieks, and a burst of hellish laughter, accompanied each of these blows. Then there was a gasp of agony. Then—nothing.

Suddenly a distant noise of steps and voices reached the depths of the subterranean vault. Tortillard, frozen with terror by the fearful scene at which he had been present without seeing it, perceived several persons holding lights, who descended the staircase rapidly. In a moment the cave was full of agents of safety, led by Narcisse Borel. The Municipal Guards followed. Tortillard was seized on the first steps of the cellar, with the Chouette's basket still in his hand.

Narcisse Borel, with some of his men, descended into the Schoolmaster's cavern. They all paused, struck by the appalling sight. Chained by the leg to an enormous stone placed in the middle of the cave, the Schoolmaster, with his hair on end, his long beard, foaming mouth, was



moving like a wild beast about his den, drawing after him by the two legs the dead carcase of the Chouette, whose head was horribly fractured. It required desperate exertions to snatch her from his grasp and manacle him. After a determined resistance they at length conveyed him into the low parlour of the cabaret, a large, dark room, lighted by a solitary window. There, handcuffed and guarded, were Barbillon, Nicolas Martial, his mother and sister. They had been apprehended at the very moment when laying violent hands on the jewel-matcher to cut her throat. She was recovering herself in another room. Stretched on the ground, and hardly restrained by two men, the Schoolmaster, slightly wounded, but quite deranged, was roaring like a wild bull.

Barbillon, with his head hanging down, his face ghastly, lead-coloured, his lips colourless, eye fixed and savage, his long and straight hair falling on the collar of his blouse, torn in the struggle, was seated on a bench, his wrists, enclosed in handcuffs, resting on his knees. The juvenile appearance of this fellow (he was scarcely eighteen years of age), the regularity of his beardless features, already emaciated and withered, were rendered still more deplorable by the hideous stamp which debauchery and crime had imprinted on his physiognomy. Impassive, he did not say a word. It could not be determined whether this apparent insensibility was owing to stupor or to a calm energy; his breathing was rapid, and, at times, he wiped away the perspiration from his pale brow with his fettered hands.

By his side was Calabash, whose cap had been torn off, and her yellowish hair, tied behind with a piece of tape, hung down in several scanty and tangled meshes. More savage than subdued, her thin and bilious cheeks were somewhat suffused, as she looked disdainfully at her brother Nicolas, who was in a chair in front of her. Anticipating the fate that awaited him, this scoundrel was dejected. With drooping head and trembling knees he was overcome with fright; his teeth chattered convulsively, and he heaved heavy groans.

The mother Martial, the only one unmoved, exhibited every proof that she had lost nothing of her accustomed audacity. With head erect she looked unshrinkingly around her. However, at the sight of Bras-Rouge—whom they brought into the low room, after having made him accompany the commissary and his clerk in the minute search they had made all over the place—the widow's features contracted in spite of herself, and her small and usually dull eyes lighted up like those of an infuriated viper; her pinched-up lips became livid, and she twisted her manacled arms. Then, as if sorry she had made this mute display of impotent rage, she subdued her emotion, and became cold and calm again.

Whilst the commissary and his clerk were writing their depositions, Narcisse Borel, rubbing his hands, cast a satisfied look on the important capture he had made, and which freed Paris from a band of dangerous criminals; but confessing to himself how useful Bras-Rouge had really been in the affair, he could not help casting on him an expressive and grateful look.

Tortillard's father was to share until after trial the confinement and lot of those he had informed against, and, like them, he was handcuffed; and, even more than them, did he assume a trembling air of consternation, twisting his weasel's features with all his might, in order to give them a

despairing expression, and heaving tremendous sighs. He embraced Tortillard, as if he should find some consolation in his paternal caresses.

The little cripple did not seem much moved by these marks of tenderness; he had just learned that, for a time, he would be moved off to the prison for young offenders.

"What a misery to have a dear child!" cried Bras-Rouge, pretending to be greatly affected. "It is we two who are most unfortunate, madame, for we shall be separated from our children."

The widow could no longer preserve her calmness; and having no doubt of Bras-Rouge's treachery, which she had foretold, she exclaimed,—

"I was sure it was you who had *sold* my son at Toulon. There, Judas!" and she spat in his face. "You sell our heads! Well, they shall see the right sort of deaths—deaths of true Martials!"

"Yes; we shan't shrink before the *carline* (guillotine)," added Calabash, with savage excitement.

The widow, glancing towards Nicholas, said to her daughter, with an air of unutterable contempt,—

"That coward there will dishonour us on the scaffold!"

Some minutes afterwards the widow and Calabash, accompanied by two policemen, got into a hackney-coach to go to St. Lazare; Barbillon, Nicolas, and Bras-Rouge, were conveyed to La Force, whilst the Schoolmaster was conveyed to the Conciergerie, where there are cells for the reception of lunatics.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE PRESENTATION.

A few days after the murder of Madame Séraphin, the death of the Chouette, and the arrest of the gang of desperadoes taken by surprise at Bras-Rouge's house, Rodolph paid another visit to the house in the Rue du Temple.

We have already observed that, with the view of practising artifice for artifice with Jacques Ferrand, discovering his hidden crimes, obliging him to repair them, and inflicting condign punishment should the guilty wretch, either by skill or hypocrisy, continue to evade the just punishment of the

laws, Rodolph had sent to fetch from one of the prisons in Germany a young and beautiful Creole, the unworthy wife of the negro David. This female, lovely in person as depraved in mind, as fascinating as dangerous, had reached Paris the preceding evening, and had received the most minute instructions from Baron de Graün.

The reader will recollect that in the last interview between Rodolph and Madame Pipelet, the latter having very cleverly managed to propose Cecily to Madame Séraphin as a servant to the notary in place of Louise Morel, her proposition had been so well received that the femme-de-charge had promised to speak to Jacques Ferrand on the subject; and this she had done, in terms most flattering to Cecily, the very morning of the day on which she (Madame Séraphin) had been drowned at the Isle du Ravageur.

The motive for Rodolph's visit was therefore to inquire the result of Cecily's introduction. To his great astonishment he found, on entering the lodge, that although eleven o'clock in the morning had struck by all the neighbouring dials, Pipelet had not yet risen, while Anastasie was standing beside his bed, offering him some sort of drink.

As Alfred, whose forehead and eyes were entirely concealed beneath his huge cotton nightcap, did not reply to his wife's inquiries, she concluded he slept, and therefore closed the curtains of his bed. Turning round she perceived Rodolph, and, as usual, gave him a military salute, by lifting the back of her left hand up to her wig.

"Ah, my king of lodgers! service to you!—how are you? As for me, I'm upset—bewildered—stupified. Pretty doings have there been in the house since you was here. And my poor Alfred—obliged to keep his bed ever since yesterday!"

"Why, what has happened?"

"Positively, don't you guess? Still going on in the old way with that monster of a painter, who is more bitter than ever against Alfred. He has quite muddled his brains, till I declare I don't know what to do with him."

"Cabrion again?"

"Oh, *he'll* never leave off."

"He must be the very devil!"

"Really, M. Rodolph, I shall very soon think so; for he always knows the very instant I quit the house. Scarcely is my back turned than there he is, in the twinkling of an eye, worrying and tormenting my poor old dear of a husband, who is as helpless and frightened as a babby. Only last night, when I had just stepped out as far as M. Ferrand's the notary's——Ah, there's pretty work there, too!"

"But Cecily?" said Rodolph, with some little impatience. "I called to know——"

"Hold hard, my king of lodgers! Don't be in such a hurry, or you'll put me out. And I've such a deal to tell you, I don't know when I shall have done; and if once I'm interrupted in a story, I never know when to begin again."

"There now, go on as fast as you can; I'm listening."

"Well then, first and foremost, what do you think has happened in the house? Ah, you'll never guess, so I'll tell you. Only imagine, old Mother Burette's being taken up!"

"What, the female pawnbroker?"

"Oh Lord, she seems to have had a curious mixture of trades; for besides being a money-lender, she was a receiver of stolen goods, a melter of gold and silver, a fortune-teller, a cheat, a dealer in second-hand clothes, and any sort of contraband articles. The worst of the story is that M. Bras-Rouge, her old sweetheart and our principal lodger, is also arrested. I tell you the house is thoroughly upset with these strange doings."

"Arrested! Bras-Rouge arrested?"

"That he was, I can promise you. Why, even his mischievous little imp of a son—the lame boy we call Tortillard—has also been locked up. They say that lots of murders have been planned and managed at his house, which was the well-known resort of a gang of ruffians; that the Chouette, one of Mother Burette's most particular friends, has been strangled; and that, if assistance had not arrived in time, Mother Matthieu, the dealer in precious stones for whom Morel worked, would also have been murdered. Come, I think there's a pretty penn'orth of news for you—and cheap, too, at the price!"

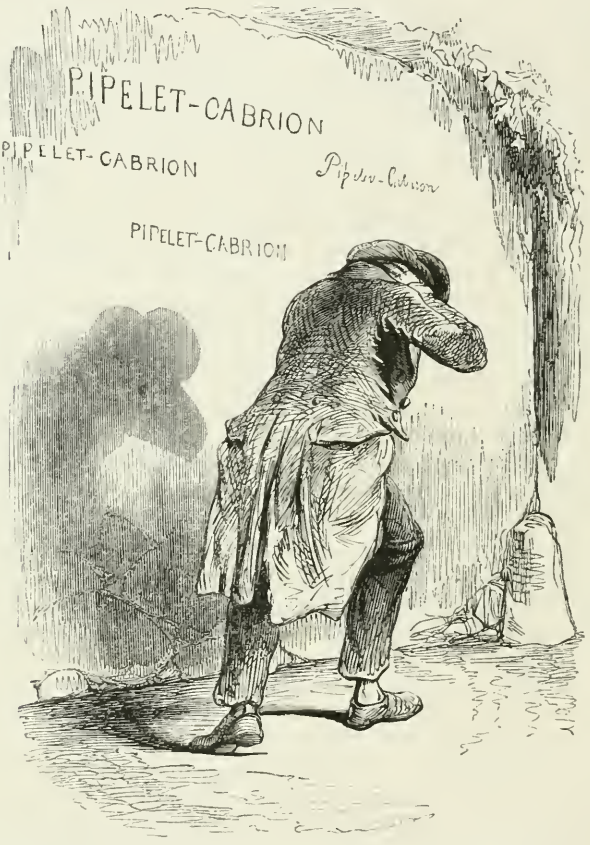
"Bras-Rouge arrested and the Chouette dead!" murmured Rodolph to himself, in deep astonishment at the tidings. "Well, the vile old hag deserved her fate, and poor Fleur-de-Marie is at least avenged!"

"So that is the state of things here," continued Anastasie. "As for M. Cabrion and his devil's tricks, I'll tell you all about it. Oh, you never knew such a bold *howdacious willin* as he is! But you shall hear—I'll go straight on with my story. But there never—no, there never was his feller for imperence! So when Mother Burette was took up, and we heard how that M. Bras-Rouge, our principal lodger, was quodded also, I says to my old boy, 'Alfred, darling,' says I, 'you must toddle off to the landlord and let him know as M. Bras-Rouge is in the stone-jug.' Well, Alfred goes; but in about two hours' time back he comes—in such a state!—such a state! White as a sheet and puffing like an ox!"

"Why, what was the matter?"

"I'm a-going to tell you. I suppose, M. Rodolph, you recollect the high wall about ten steps from here? Well, my poor, dear, darling husband was going along thinking of nothing, when, quite by chance, he just looked upon this wall. And what do you think he saw written in great staring letters with a piece of charcoal?—why, '*Pipelet* and *Cabrion!*'—the two names joined together by a sort of true-lover's knot. (Ah, it is that true-lover's knot which sticks so tight in the gizzard of my poor old chick!) That sight rather upset him; but still he tried to act like a man and not mind it. So on he went. But hardly had he proceeded ten steps farther when, on the principal entrance to the Temple, there again were the same hateful words, '*Pipelet* and *Cabrion*,' united as before! Still he walked on; but at every turn he saw the same detestable writing on the walls, doors, and even shutters of houses! Every where Pipelet and Cabrion danced before his eyes, for ever bound in the same tender tie of love or friendship! My poor dear Alfred's head began to turn round, and his eyes to grow dizzy; all sorts of horrid objects seemed to meet him and laugh him to scorn. He fancied the very people in the streets were laughing at him. So, quite confused and ashamed, he pulled his hat over

his face, and took the road towards the Boulevards, believing that the scamp Cabrion would have confined his abominations to the Rue du Temple. But no—not he! All along the Boulevards, wherever a blank spot remained or a place could be found to hold the words, had he written '*Pipelet* and *Cabrion!*'—sometimes adding, '*till death!*' At last my



poor dear man arrived at the house of the landlord, but so bewildered and stupified, that after hammering and stammering and bodgering about without being able to utter a clear sentence, the landlord having tried for nearly half-an-hour to bring him sufficiently to his senses to say what had made him come to his house, got quite in a passion, and called him a stupid old fool, and told him to go home and send his wife or somebody who could speak common sense. Well, poor dear Alfred left as he was ordered, thinking, at any rate, he would return by a different road, so as to escape those dreadful words that had so overcome him going. Do you

believe he could get rid of them, though? No; there they were, large as life, scrawled upon every place, and united by the lover's band as before."

"What, Pipelet and Cabrion still written along the walls?"

"Precisely so, my king of lodgers. The end of it was that my poor darling came home to me regularly brainstruck, talked in the wildest and most desperate way of leaving France, exiling himself for ever, and no one knows what. Well, I persuaded him to tell me all that had happened; then I did my best to quiet him, and persuade him not to worry himself about such a beggar as that Cabrion; and when I found he had grown a little calmer, I left him, and went to take Cecily to the notary's, before I proceeded on to the landlord to finish poor Alfred's message. Now, perhaps, you think I've done? But I haven't, though. No; I had hardly quitted the place, than that abominable Cabrion, who must have watched me out, sent a couple of impudent great creatures, who pursued Alfred with the most determined villany. Oh, bless you, it makes my very hair stand on end when I think of it! I'll tell you all about their proceedings another time; let me first finish about the notary. Well, off I started with Cecily in a hackney-coach—as you told me to do, you know. She was dressed in her pretty costume of a German peasant; for having only just arrived, she had not had time to procure any other, which I was to explain to M. Ferrand, and beg of him to excuse. You may believe me or not, just as you please, my king of lodgers, but though I have seen some pretty girls in my time—myself, for instance—yet I never saw one (not even myself) comparable to Cecily. And then she has such a way of using those wicked black eyes of hers! She throws into them a look—a look—that seems—to mean—I know not what—only they seem to pierce you through, and make you feel so strange; I never saw such eyes in my life! Why, there's my poor, dear, darling Alfred, whose virtue has never been suspected; well, the first time that she fixed her looks on him, the dear fellow turned as red as a carrot, and nothing in the world could have induced him to gaze in her face a second time. I'm sure for more than an hour afterwards he kept fidgeting about in his chair, as though he were sitting upon nettles. He told me afterwards he could not account for it, but that somehow the look Cecily bestowed on him seemed to bring to his thoughts all the dreadful stories that shameless Bradamanti used to tell about the female savages, and which used to make my poor dear simpleton of an Alfred blush to his very fingers' ends."

"But I want to hear what passed at the notary's. Never mind Alfred's modesty just now, but tell me."

"I was just going, M. Rodolph. It was just seven o'clock in the evening when we arrived at M. Ferrand's, and I told the porter to let his master know that Madame Pipelet was there with the young woman she had spoke to Madame Séraphin about, and by whose orders she had brought her. Upon which the porter heaved a deep sigh, and asked me if I knew what had happened to Madame Séraphin? I told him 'No; I hadn't heard of any thing being the matter with her.' Ah, M. Rodolph, prepare for another strange event—a most astounding circumstance!"

"What can it be?"

"Why, Madame Séraphin was drowned while on a party of pleasure to which she had gone with her relations."

"Drowned, and on a party of pleasure in the winter?" exclaimed Rodolph, much surprised.

"Yes, drowned, M. Rodolph. For my part I must say that I was more astonished than distressed at the news; for since that affair of poor Louise, who was taken to prison entirely through her information, I downright hated Madame Séraphin. So when I heard what had befallen her, all I did was to say to myself, 'Oh, she's drowned, is she—drowned? Well, I don't mean to make myself ill with crying, that's very sure. I shan't die of grief—that's my disposition.'"

"And M. Ferrand?"

"The porter said at first he did not think I could see his master, and begged me to wait in his lodge while he went to see. But he almost directly came back to fetch me. We crossed the courtyard, and entered an apartment on the ground-floor, where a single miserable candle was twinkling its best to light it, but without success. The notary was sitting beside the fireplace, and on the hearth a few smouldering ashes still sent out a small degree of warmth. But such a wretched hole I never saw! It was my first view of M. Ferrand. Oh, my stars, what a downright ugly fellow he is! Such a man as he might have offered to make me Queen of Arabia before I would have played Alfred false."

"And tell me, did the notary appear much struck with Cecily when she entered?"

"Why, how can any one tell what he thinks while he keeps those great green spectacles on? Besides, a godly saint such as he passes for has no business to know whether a woman is handsome or ugly. However, when we both walked into the room and stood before him, he gave quite a spring up from his seat. Most likely, he was astonished at Cecily's dress, for she looked for all the world (only a hundred thousand times better) like one of those 'buy-a-broom' girls with her short petticoats and her handsome legs set off by her blue stockings with red clocks. My conscience, what a leg she has! such a slender ankle!—and then, oh, such a calf! with a foot as small and delicate as an opera-dancer's. I can tell you that the notary seemed almost speechless with surprise, after he had looked at her through his green specs from head to toe."

"Doubtless, as you say, he was struck by the whimsicality of Cecily's costume."

"Well, may be so; however, I felt that the critical moment had arrived, and began to feel rather queer: fortunately, just as my courage began to fail me, M. Rodolph, I recollected a maxim I learned from you, and that got me safe through my difficulty."

"What maxim do you mean—I don't remember teaching you any?"

"Don't you know?—'*It is always enough for one to wish, for the other to refuse; or, for one to desire, for the other to be unwilling.*' 'So,' said I to myself, 'here goes to rid my king of lodgers of his German niece, and to burthen the hard-hearted master of poor Louise with her. Now, then, for a good piece of shamming;' and, without giving the notary breathing time, I began by saying, in a polite and insinuating

tone, ‘ I hope, sir, you'll excuse my niece being dressed as she is, but she has only just arrived, and has brought nothing with her but the costume of her country; and I am sure it don't lay in my power to provide her with others; and, besides, it would not be worth while, since we have

merely called to thank you for having allowed Madame Séraphin to say you would see Cecily, in consequence of the favourable character I had given her. Still, sir, I don't think, after all, she would suit you."

" Capital! Madame Pipelet; go on."

" ‘ And why so?' inquired the notary, who had established himself by the warmest corner of the fire, and seemed to be looking very attentively at us from over his green spectacles, ‘ why should you suppose your niece not likely to suit me?' ‘ Because, sir, Cecily is already quite home-sick: she has only been here three days, and yet she wants to go back; and

so, she says, she will, too, if she is obliged to beg her way, or sing songs and sell little brooms, like the rest of her country-women.' 'But bless me!' answered M. Ferrand, 'do you, who are her principal relation, mean to allow of that?' 'I don't see how I am to hinder her, sir,' said I. 'Certainly, I am the nearest relation she has, for the poor thing is an orphan, as I told good Madame Séraphin; but then she is twenty years of age, and, of course, mistress of her own actions.' 'Stuff and nonsense!' interrupted he, quite impatiently; 'don't tell me about being her own mistress: at her time of life she is bound to obey her relations, and take their advice in all things.' Upon which Cecily began to cry and to creep up to me, all of a tremble, as if she was quite afraid of the notary."

"And what said Jacques Ferrand further?"

"Oh, he kept muttering, in a grumbling tone, 'A young creature at that age left to her own guidance! why it would be the ruin of her! and as for begging her way back to Germany—a pretty idea! And you mean to call yourself her aunt, and say that you would sanction such conduct?' 'All right,' says I to myself: 'you are falling into the trap as neat as ninepence, you miserly old hunks! and if I do not saddle you with Cecily, my name is not what it is!' 'Yes,' cried I, in a discontented voice, 'I'm her aunt, sure enough, and worse luck to me for having such an incumbrance; I have difficulty enough to earn my bread, without having a great overgrown girl like that, to take it out of my mouth; and I would much rather she went back to her own country than stop here to be a burthen to me. The deuce take people who can't manage to maintain their own children, but just send them for others to work for and keep, without even so much as paying their travelling expenses!' And then, as if Cecily were up to my schemes, and desirous of playing into my hands, she burst out into such a fit of crying and sobbing as quite touched the notary, who began in a sniffling, whining tone, as though preaching a sermon, 'Let me tell you that you are accountable before Providence for the charge He has intrusted to your care and keeping, and you are answerable for any false step this poor girl may take. Now I am willing to join you in a charitable action; and if your niece will promise me to be honest, industrious, virtuous, pious, and, above all, never upon any occasion to desire to leave the house, I will take pity on her, and receive her into my service.' 'No, no!' said Cecily, crying more violently than ever, 'I don't want to stop here with this gentleman: I wish to go back to my home; and I will, too!'"

"Ah, ah," thought Rodolph, "her dangerous falsehood has not deserted her—the depraved creature has, evidently, fully comprehended the instructions she received from Baron de Graün." Then, speaking aloud, the prince continued, "Did Cecily's resistance appear to displease M. Jacques Ferrand?"

"Yes, M. Rodolph, it seemed to make him as savage as could be, and he muttered something between his teeth I could not make out. Then he said, abruptly, 'It is not what you would prefer, young woman, but what is most suitable and creditable that is to be considered. Providence will never forsake you so long as you conduct yourself respectably and virtuously, and carefully attend to your religious duties. You will be here in a family as pious as it is strict in all such matters; and if your aunt has

any real regard for your welfare, she will take advantage of my offer. Your wages will be trifling at first, but hereafter I may be induced to increase them should your good behaviour render you deserving of encouragement.' 'Bravo!' thinks I to myself, 'I've regularly hooked the miser, and fixed him with Cecily as right as a trivet. Why, you old curmudgeon! you old skinflint! you miserable, hard-hearted old hypocrite! you know very well that Séraphin was your slave for years, and yet you seem to have forgotten her death, and the dreadful manner of it, as much as though nothing had happened.' Then I said out loud, 'No doubt, sir, yours is a very good place, and one as many would be thankful to have, but, if this girl is so home-sick, what am I to do?' 'Oh, take no notice of it,' replied the notary, 'and it will soon wear away; but make up your minds—just say one way or the other: if you decide upon your niece entering my service, bring her here to-morrow evening at the same hour you came to-night; and my porter will shew her about the premises, and also explain her work to her. As for her wages, I shall begin with twenty francs a-month and her food.' 'Oh, sir, I hope you will make it twenty-five francs—twenty is really too little!' 'No, no, not at present; by and by perhaps I may, if I am satisfied. One thing, however, I must impress upon you, and that is, that your niece will never go beyond these walls, neither will she be allowed to receive any visitors.' 'Bless your heart, sir! who could come to see her? why she does not know a single soul in Paris, except myself, and I am obliged to stay at home to mind my lodge. I have been terribly put about to come out this evening, so you will see nothing of me; and as for my niece, she will be as great a stranger to me as though she was in her own country; and the best way to prevent her going out will be, to make her wear the costume of her country—she could not venture in the streets dressed in that manner.' 'You are quite right,' replied the notary; 'it is, besides, always respectable to wear the dress of our own country: your niece shall, therefore, continue

to dress as she now is.' 'Come, my girl,' said I to Cecily, who, with her head hanging down and her finger in the corner of her mouth, was keeping up a continual weeping, 'come, make up your mind. A good place with a worthy master is not to be found every day; so, if you choose to refuse it, do, but don't look to me for any further support: I'll have nothing to do with you, I can tell you!' Upon which Cecily, swelling as though her heart would burst, replied, sobbing, 'Very well, then, if aunt was so particular she should stay, but only on condition that, if she did not find herself comfortable, she might come away at the end of a fortnight.' 'Don't be alarmed,' answered the notary, 'I shall not force you to stop against your will. I can promise you there are too many young persons would be thankful to have my situation; but I pity your position as an orphan, and, therefore, give you the preference. There, take your earnest money; and let your aunt bring you here about this time to-morrow evening.' Cecily was too busy crying to take the two francs' piece the old starvemouse offered, so I took it for her. We made our courtesies and came away."

"You have managed admirably, Madame Pipelet; and I do not forget my promise: here is what I promised you, if you managed to get this girl taken off my hands."

"Wait till to-morrow before you give it me, my king of lodgers!" cried Madame Pipelet, putting back the money Rodolph offered her; "perhaps, when I go to take Cecily this evening, M. Ferrand may have changed his mind."

"Not he, depend upon it! But where is she?"

"In the small room adjoining the apartments of the commandant; she will not stir out after the orders you gave. She seems mild and gentle as a lamb; but then her eyes! oh, dear! it is difficult to fancy her either one or the other, when one looks at those——Talking of the commandant, what a plotting, mysterious person he is! Would you believe it?—when he came here to superintend the packing-up of his furniture, he told me that if any letters came addressed to '*Madame Vincent*,' they were for him, and that I was to send them to the Rue Mondine, No. 5. The idea of the pretty creature having his letters addressed as if for a female! what a conceited jackanapes he is! But the best of it was, he asked me what had become of his wood! 'Your *wood?*' said I, 'why don't you ask after your *forest* when you are about it?' Oh, I said it so flat and plain! A mean, grasping hound, to trouble himself to ask after two pitiful loads of wood! his wood, indeed! 'What has become of your wood?' repeated I, still working him on, till he got quite white with passion, 'why I burnt it to keep your things from the damp, which would otherwise have made mushrooms grow upon your fine embroidered cap, and the mildew from rotting your smart, glittering *robe-de-chambre*, which you must love so dearly, because you have put it on so many times when you were fool enough to wait for those who never meant to come, but were only laughing at you! like the lady who made believe she was going to pay you a visit, and then passed your door, though you had set it wide open to shew yourself decked in all your finery. Your wood, indeed! I like that! you poor squeeze-penny of a commandant! enough to disgust one with men altogether.'"

A deep, plaintive groan, something between a grunt and a sigh, from the bed on which Alfred reposed, here interrupted Madame Pipelet.

"Ah, there's the old duck beginning to stir; he will not be long before he wakes now. Will you excuse me, my king of lodgers?"

"Certainly; but I have yet some particulars to inquire of you."

"Oh, very well," answered Madame Pipelet. Then going up to her husband, she drew back the curtains, saying, "How are you by this time, my old chick? Look! there's M. Rodolph, who has heard all about this fresh villany of Cabrion's, and is as sorry about it as can be."

"Ah, M. Rodolph," murmured Alfred, languidly turning his head towards the announced visitor, "this time the monster has struck at my heart; I shall quit this bed no more. I am now the object of all the placards of this vast city; my name is blazoned upon every wall in Paris, linked with that of a wretch unworthy of mention. Yes, *mŏssieur*, there you may see '*Pipelet* and *Cabrion*' bound together by an enormous band of union. Yes, I—I—the injured Pipelet—united in bonds of seeming amity and intimacy with that fellow Cabrion! Oh, *mŏssieur*, pity me! My name joined with his in the eyes of all the dwellers of this great capital—the leading city of Europe!"

"Ah, M. Rodolph knows all about that; but he has yet to be told of your yesterday's adventures with those two singular women, or whatever they were."

"Alas, monsieur," sighed Alfred, in a mournful voice, "he reserved his master-stroke of wickedness and fiendish malice till the last. This, however, passes all bounds, and human patience can bear no more!"

"Come, my dear M. Pipelet, calm yourself, and endeavour to relate this fresh annoyance to me."

"All that he has hitherto done to vex and insult me is as nothing

compared to his last malignant scheme to break my heart and ruin my peace. But now the shameless monster has gone the full extent of fiendish provocation. I know not whether I have the power of describing to you the scene of last night; when I attempt to speak, shame, confusion, and outraged modesty, seem to deprive me of voice and breath."

M. Pipelet, having managed with some difficulty to raise himself in his bed, modestly buttoned his flannel waistcoat up to his throat, and began in the following terms,—

"My wife had just gone out, absorbed in the bitter reflections arising from the sight of my name so disgracefully prostituted on every wall in Paris; I sought to while away my solitary hours by attending to the new soleing of a boot twenty times commenced and as often abandoned—thanks to the unceasing persecutions of my pitiless persecutor. Well, sir, I was sitting at a table with the boot on my arm, though my thoughts were far otherwise engaged, when I saw the lodge-door open and a female enter. The person who had just come in was wrapped in a large hooded cloak, and, without thinking any harm, I civilly rose from my seat, and put my hand to my hat. Then I observed another female, also attired in a similar cloak, with a large hood, enter the lodge and shut the door after her. Although somewhat astonished at the familiarity of such a proceeding, and the silence maintained by both the women, I rose a second time from my chair, and a second time I lifted my hand to my hat. And then, sir—but no, no, I can never finish the recital; my wounded modesty chokes my utterance."

"Come, come, old pet," said Madame Pipelet, encouragingly, "get on with your story; we are all men here."

"Well then," stammered forth Alfred, his face becoming scarlet as the fullest blown peony, "then their mantles fell to the ground. And what do you think I saw? Why, a couple of syrens, or nymphs, or witches of one kind or the other, with no sort of clothing except a petticoat made of leaves, while a wreath of similar description decorated their heads! And then the two advanced towards me with outstretched arms, as though inviting me to throw myself into them."

"Oh, the impudent sluts!" exclaimed Anastasia.

"Their impure advances disgusted me," continued Alfred, animated with a chaste indignation; "and, in conformity with a habit which has ever attended the most critical moments of my life, I remained still and motionless on my chair. Then, profiting by my surprise and stupor, the two syrens came gently forward to a sort of low music, turning and twisting and extending their arms and legs in all directions. I became petrefied, as though changed to stone; I waited their approach in silent agony. They came nearer and nearer, till at last they wrapped me tight in their arms."

"Did they, though?" cried Anastasie; "oh, the hussies! I only wish I had been there with my broomstick; I'd have taught them how to come hopping and skipping, and holding out their arms for an innocent, virtuous, married man to tumble into—I would, the bold-faced beggars!"

"When I felt myself in a manner half-stifled between them, I gave myself up for lost. My blood retreated from my heart—I felt as if struck with death; when one of the syrens—a great, fair girl, and the boldest of the

two—leaned upon my shoulder, took off my hat, and still slowly dancing and whirling around me, left me bald-headed and defenceless. Then the other one, accompanying the action with all sorts of attitudes and singular dances, and waving of the arms, draws out a pair of scissors she must have hid somewhere—for I'm quite sure she had no pockets—came close behind me, and grasping with one hand all my remaining hair, snipped it

all off with one cut of her huge scissors; yes, all—every lock—every hair I had to cover my poor old head;—dancing, and wheeling, and balancing first on one foot, then on the other, swaying out legs and arms in all sorts of stage-struck ways; then joining voices, the pair of audacious spirits began singing, ' 'Tis for Cabrion—for Cabrion; we take your locks for Cabrion—your dear friend Cabrion!' Whilst the second voice repeated

in a louder strain,—'Your head is shorn for Cabrion—for Cabrion, your friend!'"

After a pause, interrupted by repeated sighs and groans, Alfred resumed,—

"During this impudent spoliation I once ventured to raise my eyes, and then I saw flat against the windows of the lodge the detestable countenance of Cabrion, with his large beard and pointed-crowned hat. He was laughing, too—laughing with all his might. Oh, how I shuddered at the horrible vision! To escape from so harrowing a sight I closed my eyes. When I opened them again all had disappeared, and I found myself seated on my chair, bald-headed and completely disfigured for life. You see, monsieur, that by dint of obstinacy, impudence, and cunning, Cabrion has at length effected his fell design. But by what fearful, what diabolical means, has he succeeded! He wishes the world to believe he is my accepted friend; began by sticking up a notice here in my immediate neighbourhood to the effect that he and I had entered into a treaty of friendship! Then, not content with so infamous an assertion, he has caused my name, in conjunction with his own, to be displayed on every wall in Paris, binding them together with an enormous band of union, so that at this moment the whole of this vast capital is impressed with the most perfect belief of my close intimacy with this scoundrel. Then he desired locks of my hair, and he has every hair off my head—no doubt with the view—the guilty view, of exhibiting them as proofs of our sworn friendship. Thanks to the merciless exaction of his bold-faced dancing women, my last lock is stolen. So now, monsieur, you see plainly there is nothing left for me but to quit France—my lovely and beloved France—in whose dear bosom I had hoped to live and die!"

And with these pathetic words Alfred clasped his hands, closed his eyes, and threw himself back upon his bed.

"Oh, nonsense, you old duck!" cried Anastasie. "On the contrary, now the villain has gained his point and stolen your hair, he will let you alone for the future. He has no further cause to disturb and torment you."

"Let me alone?" exclaimed M. Pipelet, with a convulsive spring upwards. "Oh, you know him not; he is insatiable. True, he has got the hair he so much desired to obtain; but who can say what he may further require of me?"

The appearance of Rigolette at the entrance to the lodge put a stop to the lamentations of M. Pipelet.

"Stay where you are, mademoiselle!" cried he, faithful to his habitual chaste delicacy. "Pray don't think of coming in, for I am undressed and in bed!" So saying, he covered himself up almost to his eyes, while Rigolette, surprised and bewildered, remained at the threshold of the door.

"Oh, my pretty neighbour," said Rodolph, pitying her confusion, "I was just coming up to speak with you. Can you wait for me one minute?" Then addressing Anastasie, he said, "Pray let nothing prevent your taking Cécily to Jacques Ferrand's this evening."

"Make yourself perfectly easy, my king of lodgers; at seven o'clock precisely she shall be duly placed there. Now that Morel's wife is able

to get about, I will ask her to mind the lodge for me while I am away; for, bless you, Alfred would not stay by himself—not for a 'varsal crown!"

The bright freshness of Rigolette's complexion was daily fading away, while her once round, dimpled cheek had sunk and given place to a pale, careworn countenance, the usually gay, mirthful expression of which had changed into a grave, thoughtful cast, more serious and mournful still since her meeting with Fleur-de-Marie at the gate of Saint-Lazare.

"I am so glad to see you," said Rigolette to Rodolph, when they were at a convenient distance from the lodge of Madame Pipelet. "I have so much to say to you; I have, indeed."

"Well, then, first of all, tell me of yourself and your health. Let me look at this pretty face, and see whether it is as gay and blooming as usual. No, indeed. I declare you have grown quite pale and thin; I am sure you work too hard."

"Oh no, indeed, M. Rodolph, it is not that. On the contrary, my work does me good; it hinders me from thinking too much, for I am obliged to attend to what I am about. But it is grief, M. Rodolph, and nothing else, that has altered me so much. And how can I help it? Every time I see that poor Germain, I grieve more and more."

"He is still as desponding as ever, then?"

"Oh, worse than ever, M. Rodolph. And what is the most distressing is, that whatever I try to do to cheer him up, takes quite the contrary effect; it seems as though a spell hung over me!" And here the large, dark eyes of Rigolette were filled with tears.

"How do you know, my dear neighbour?"

"Why, only yesterday I went to see him, and to take him a book he was desirous of having; it was a romance we read together when we lived happily as near neighbours and dear friends. Well, directly he saw the book, he burst into tears; but that did not astonish me—it seemed natural enough. Poor fellow! I dare say it brought back to his recollection those happy evenings when he used to sit beside the fire in my nice, pretty little room; while now he was in a horrid prison, the companion of vile and wicked men, who only jeered at his melancholy. Poor, dear Germain! it is very, very hard!"

"Take courage, my dear friend," said Rodolph. "When Germain quits his prison, and his innocence is proved, he will find his mother and many dear friends, in whose society, as well as in yours, he will soon forget his present sufferings, as well as the hard trials he has undergone."

"That's all very pleasant when it arrives, but that won't stop his tormenting himself till it does. But that is not all, neither."

"What other uneasiness has he?"

"Why, he being the only innocent man among all the bad people there, they are always annoying and behaving ill to him, because he will not join in their idle and vicious amusements. The head turnkey, who is a very good sort of man, advised me to recommend Germain, for his own sake, not to keep himself at quite such a distance from his companions, but to try and familiarise himself with these bad men. However, it is no use trying; he cannot bring himself to endure their company or conversation. And I am constantly tormented with the dread that some of these days they will do him some harm out of spite."

Then all at once interrupting herself, and drying her tears, Rigolette resumed,—

"But, dear me, how selfish I am! I keep talking of my own concerns without ever recollecting to speak to you about the Goualeuse."

"The Goualeuse!" exclaimed Rodolph, with surprise.

"I met her the day before yesterday, when I went to see Louise at Saint-Lazare."

"The Goualeuse?"

"Yes, indeed, M. Rodolph."

"At Saint-Lazare?"

"She was leaving the prison in company with an elderly female."

"It cannot be," exclaimed Rodolph, in extreme astonishment; "you must be mistaken."

"I assure you it was herself, M. Rodolph."

"You really must be in error."

"Oh, no, I was not mistaken; although she was dressed as a country girl I recollected her again directly. She looked beautiful as ever, though pale; and she had just the same melancholy look she used to have."

"How very strange that she should be in Paris without my having heard of it! I can scarcely credit it. And what had she been doing at Saint-Lazare?"

"I suppose, like myself, she had been to see some one confined there—but I had not time to ask her many questions, for the person who was with her seemed so very cross, and to be in such a hurry! Then it seems you know the Goualeuse as well as myself, M. Rodolph?"

"I do, certainly."

"Oh, then, that settles the matter! and it must have been of you she spoke."

"Of me?"

"Yes, indeed, M. Rodolph. For, you see, I was just mentioning to her what had happened to poor Louise and Germain—both so good, yet so persecuted by that wicked Jacques Ferrand—taking care to do as you bid me, and not say a word of your being interested in their welfare—so then the Goualeuse told me if a generous person she knew were once acquainted with their hard fate, and how little they deserved it, he would be sure to assist them. And then I asked her the name of the person she alluded to, and she named you, M. Rodolph."

"Oh, then, it was her, sure enough."

"You can't imagine how much surprised we both were at this discovery, either of resemblance or name; and before we parted we agreed to let each other know whether *our* M. Rodolph was one and the same. And it seems you are the very identical Rodolph both of La Goualeuse and myself. Are you not, neighbour?"

"I believe so: and I can, at least, assure you I take the greatest possible interest in the fate of this poor girl,—still I am much surprised to find, by what you say, that she is in Paris. And so great is my astonishment that, had you not so faithfully related your interview, I should have persisted in believing you were mistaken. But I must say goodbye for the present—what you tell me respecting La Goualeuse obliges me to quit you. Be as careful as ever in not mentioning to any one that there are certain unknown friends watching over the welfare both of Louise and Germain, who will come forward at a right moment and see them safe through their troubles; it is more essential than ever that strict secrecy should be kept on this point. By the way, how are the Morel family getting on?"

"Oh, extremely well, M. Rodolph. The mother has quite got about again, and the children are daily improving. Ah! the whole family owe their life and happiness to you! you are so good and so generous to them."

"And how is poor Morel himself? does he get any better?"

"Oh, dear yes: I heard of him yesterday—he seems from time to time to have some lucid moments, and hopes are entertained of his madness being curable. So be of good heart, neighbour, take care of yourself, and goodbye for the present."

"But first tell me truly, are you quite sure you want for nothing? Are you still able to maintain yourself with the profits of your needle?"

"Oh, yes, thank you, M. Rodolph. I work rather later at night to make up for my lost time during the day. But it does not much matter, for if I go to bed I don't sleep."

"Poor, dear neighbour! why you have grown sadly out of spirits. I am afraid that '*Papa Crêtu*' and '*Ramonette*' don't sing much, if they wait for you to set them the example."

"You are right enough, M. Rodolph, my birds have quite left off singing, as well as myself. Now I know you will laugh at me, but I'll tell you what I firmly think and believe—the poor little creatures are aware that I am dull and out of spirits, and instead of singing and warbling as if their little throats would burst for joy when they see me, they just give a little gentle twitter, as though they would not disturb me

for the world, but would be so glad to console me if they had the power. It is very stupid of me to fancy such things, is it not, M. Rodolph?"

"Not at all! and I am quite sure that your affectionate friends the birds have observed your being less happy than usual."

"Well, I'm sure I shouldn't wonder! the poor, dear things are so very clever," said Rigolette, innocently, delighted to find her own opinion as to the sagacity of her companions in solitude thus powerfully confirmed.

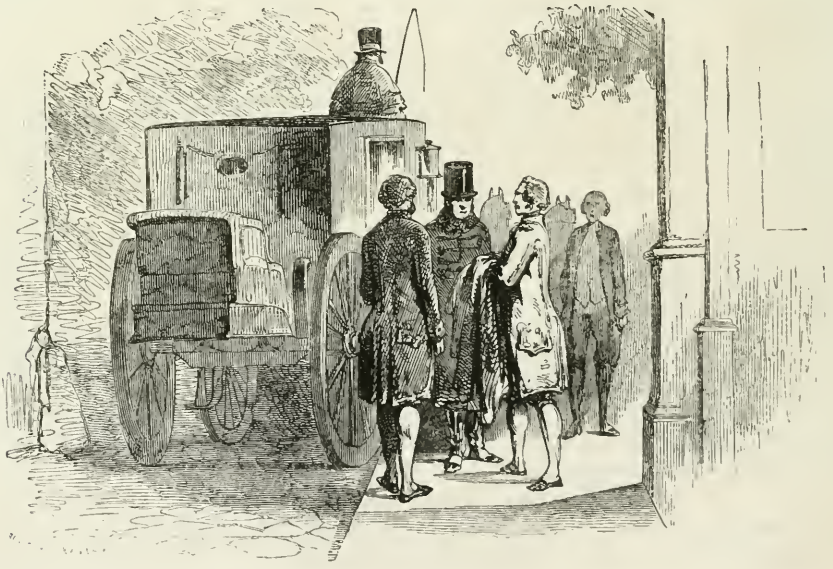
"Oh, I am quite sure about it, nothing is more intelligent than gratitude. But, once more, goodbye,—I shall see you again soon, I hope, and by that time, I trust, your pretty eyes will have grown brighter, your cheeks regained their usual roses, and your merry voice have recovered all its gaiety, till Papa Crêtu and Ramonette will scarcely be able to keep up with you."

"Heaven grant you may prove a true prophet, M. Rodolph!" said Rigolette, heaving a deep sigh. "But goodbye, neighbour, don't let me keep you."

"Fare you well, for the present!"

Rodolph, wholly at a loss to understand why Madame Georges should have brought or sent Fleur-de-Marie to Paris without giving him the least intimation of her intention, hastened home for the purpose of despatching a special messenger to the farm at Bouqueval.

Just as he entered the Rue Plumet he observed a travelling carriage draw up before the entrance of his hôtel. The vehicle contained Murphy, who had that instant returned from Normandy, whither he had gone, as the reader is already aware, to counteract the base schemes of the mother-in-law of Madame d'Harville and her infamous confederate Bradamanti.



CHAPTER XLII.

MURPHY AND POLIDORI.

Sir Walter Murphy's features were beaming with satisfaction. When he alighted from the carriage he gave a brace of pistols to one of the prince's servants, took off his long travelling coat, and, without giving himself time to change his clothes, followed Rodolph, who impatiently had preceded him to his apartment.

"Good news, monseigneur! good news!" exclaimed the squire, when he was alone with Rodolph: "the wretches are unmasked, M. d'Orbigny is saved. You despatched me just in time: one hour later and another crime would have been committed."

"And Madame d'Harville?"

"Is overjoyed at having again acquired her father's affection; and full of happiness at having arrived, thanks to your advice, in time to snatch him from certain death."

"So, then, Polidori——"

"Was, in this instance, the worthy accomplice of Madame d'Harville's stepmother. But what a wretch is this stepmother! what *sang froid!* what audacity! and this Polidori! Ah! monseigneur, you have frequently desired to thank me for what you call my proofs of devotion."

"I have always said proofs of friendship, my dear Murphy."

"Well, monseigneur, never—no never—has this friendship been exposed to a severer trial than in this present case!" said the squire, with an air half serious, half pleasant.

"What mean you?"

"The disguises of the coalman, the peregrinations in the Cité, and all that sort of thing, they have been as nothing, actually nothing, when compared with the journey I have just made with that infernal Polidori."

"What do you mean? Polidori?"

"I have brought him back with me."

"With you?"

"With me: judge what company! During twelve hours, side by side with the man I most despise and hate in the world—I'd as soon travel with a serpent—any beast of antipathy!"

"And where is Polidori now?"

"In the house in the Allée des Veuves, under good and safe guard."

"Then he made no resistance to following you?"

"None. I offered him the choice between being apprehended at once by the French authorities, or being my prisoner in the Allée des Veuves—he didn't hesitate for an instant."

"You are right, it is best to have him thus in our grasp. You are worth your weight in gold, my dear old Murphy. But tell me all about your journey, I am impatient to know how this shameless woman, and her equally shameless accomplice, were at last unmasked."

"Nothing could be more simple. I had only to follow the letter of your instructions in order to terrify and crush these wretches. Under these circumstances, monseigneur, you have served, as you always do, persons of worth, and punished the wicked, noble preserver that you are!"

"Sir Walter! Sir Walter! do you recollect the flatteries of the Baron de Graun?" said Rodolph, smiling.

"Well, then, monseigneur, I will begin—or, perhaps, you would prefer first reading this letter of the Marquise d'Harville's, which will inform you on every point that occurred previous to my arrival, which so completely confounded Polidori."

"A letter! pray let me have it immediately."

Murphy gave the letter of the marquise to Rodolph, adding,—

"As we had agreed, instead of accompanying Madame d'Harville to her father's, I alighted at a small inn quite close to the château, where I was to wait until the marquise sent for me."

Rodolph read what follows with tender and impatient solicitude,—

"Monseigneur,—After all I owe you already, I now owe to you my father's life. I will allow facts to speak for themselves; they will say better than I can what fresh accumulations of gratitude to you I have added to those already amassed in my heart. Understanding all the importance of the advice you sent to me by Sir Walter Murphy, who overtook me on my way to Normandy, a short distance from Paris, I travelled as speedily as possible to the Château des Aubiers. I know not why, but the countenances of the persons who received me appeared to me sinister. I did not see amongst them any one of the old servitors of our house, no one knew me. I was obliged to tell them my name. I learned that for several days my father had been suffering greatly, and that my step-mother had just brought a physician from Paris. I had no doubt but this was Doctor Polidori. Desirous of being immediately conducted to my father, I inquired for an old valet-de-chambre to whom he was much attached; he had quitted the château some time previously. This I learned from a house-steward who had shewn me to my apartment, saying that he would inform my step-mother of my arrival. Was it illusion or suspicion? It seemed to me that my coming annoyed the people at the château where all was gloomy and sinister. In the bent of mind in which I was we seek to draw inferences from the slightest circumstances. I remarked in every part traces of disorder and neglect, as if it had been too much trouble to take care of a house which was so soon to be abandoned. My uneasiness—my anxiety increased at every moment. After having established my daughter and her governess in an apartment, I was about to proceed to my father, when my step-mother entered the apartment. In spite of her artfulness, in spite of the control which she ordinarily exercised over herself, she appeared alarmed at my sudden arrival. 'M. d'Orbigny does not expect your visit, madam," she said to me, "and he is suffering so much that a surprise may be fatal. I think it, therefore, best that he should not be told of your arrival, for he would be unable to account for it, and——' I did not allow her to finish. 'A terrible event has occurred, madam,' I said, 'M. d'Harville is dead, in consequence of a fatal imprudence. After so deplorable a result, I could no longer remain in Paris in my own house, and I have, therefore, come to my father's, in order to pass the first days of my mourning.' A widow! ah! that, indeed, is unexpected happiness!' exclaimed my step-mother, in a rage. From what you know, monseigneur, of the unhappy marriage which this woman had planned in order to avenge herself on me, you will comprehend the brutality of her remark. 'It is because I fear you might be as *unexpectedly* happy as myself, madam, that I came here,' was my (perhaps imprudent) reply. 'I wish to see my father.' 'That's impossible, at this moment!' she replied, turning very pale; 'the sight of you would cause a dangerous degree of excitement.' 'If my father is so seriously ill,' I observed, 'why was I not informed of it?' 'Such was M. d'Orbigny's will,' replied my step-mother. 'I do not believe you, madame! and I shall go and assure myself of the truth,' I said, and turned towards the door of my chamber. 'I tell you again that the unexpected sight of you may have a most prejudicial effect on your father!' she cried, coming before me so as to hinder my further progress; 'I will not allow you to go into his room, until I have informed him of

your arrival with all the care and precaution which his situation requires.' I was in a cruel perplexity, monseigneur. A sudden surprise might really be dangerous to my father, but this woman,—usually so calm, so self-possessed,—seemed to me so overcome by my presence, I had so many reasons to doubt the sincerity of her solicitude for the health of him whom she had married from cupidity; and then, too, the presence of Doctor Polidori, the murderer of my mother, caused me altogether such extreme alarm that, believing my father's life menaced, I did not hesitate between the hope of saving him, and the fear of causing him severe emotion. 'I will see my father, and that instantly!' I said to my stepmother. And although she tried to retain me by the arm, I went out of the room. Completely losing her presence of mind, this woman tried a second time, and almost by force, to prevent me from quitting the chamber. This incredible resistance increased my alarm, I disengaged myself from her grasp, and knowing my father's apartment, I ran thither with all speed, and entered the room. Oh, monseigneur, during my life I never can forget that scene, and

the picture presented to my eyes. My father, scarcely to be recognised, pale and meagre, with suffering depicted in every feature, his head reclining on a pillow, was lying extended on a large arm-chair. At the corner of the fireplace, standing close to him, was Doctor Polidori, just about to pour into a cup, which a nurse presented to him, some drops of a liquor contained in a small glass bottle which he held in his hand. His long red beard gave even a more than usually sinister appearance to his physiognomy. I entered so hastily that he gave a look of surprise at my stepmother, who followed me with hasty steps; and instead of handing to my father the draught he had prepared for him, he suddenly placed the phial on the mantelpiece. Guided by an instinct for which I am unable to account, my first movement was to seize the phial. Remarking instantly the surprise and alarm of my stepmother and Polidori, I congratulated myself on my promptitude. My father, amazed, seemed irritated at the sight of me. I expected this. Polidori darted at me a ferocious scowl, and, in spite of the presence of my father and the nurse, I feared the wretch, seeing his crime so nearly disclosed, would have recourse to violence with me. I felt the necessity of support at a moment so decisive; and ringing the bell, one of my father's servants came in, whom I requested to tell my valet-de-chambre (who had been already informed) to go and seek some things I had left at the little inn. Sir Walter Murphy was aware that, in order not to arouse my stepmother's suspicions, in case it should be necessary to give my orders in her presence, I should employ this means of requesting him to come to me. Such was the surprise of my father and stepmother, that the servant quitted the room before they could utter a word. I felt my courage then rise, for, in a few minutes, Sir Walter Murphy would be at my side. 'What does all this mean?' said my father to me, in a voice feeble, but still angry and imperious. 'You here, Clémence, without my sending for you? Then, scarcely arrived, you seize the phial containing the draught the doctor was about to give me. Will you explain this madness?' 'Leave the room,' said my stepmother to the nurse. The woman obeyed. 'Compose yourself, my dear!' said my stepmother, addressing my father; 'you know how injurious the slightest emotion is to you. Since your daughter will come here in spite of you, and her presence is so disagreeable to you, give me your arm. I will lead you into the small salon, and then our good doctor will make Madame d'Harville comprehend how imprudent her conduct has been, to say the least of it.' And she gave her accomplice a meaning look. I at once saw through my stepmother's design. She was desirous of leading my father away, and leaving me alone with Polidori, who, in this extreme case, no doubt, would have used force to obtain from me the phial which might supply so evident a proof of his criminal designs. 'You are right,' said my father to my stepmother. 'Since I am thus pursued, even in my private apartments, without respect for my wishes, I will leave the place free to intruders.' And rising with difficulty, he took the arm that was offered to him by my stepmother, and went towards the salon. At this moment Polidori advanced towards me; but I went close up to my father and said to him, 'I will explain to you why I have arrived so suddenly, and what may appear strange in my conduct. I became yesterday a widow; and it was yesterday, father, that I learned

your life was threatened.' He was walking very much bent, but at these words he stopped, threw himself erect, and looking at me with intense surprise, said, 'You are a widow?—my life is threatened? What does all this mean?' 'And who dares threaten the life of M. d'Orbigny, madam?' asked my stepmother, most audaciously. 'Yes, who threatens it?' added Polidori. 'You, sir!—you, madam!' I replied. 'What horror!' exclaimed my stepmother, advancing a step towards me. 'What I assert I will prove, madam!' I replied. 'Such an accusation is most frightful!' cried my father. 'I will leave the house this very moment, since I am exposed to such shameful calumnies,' said Doctor Polidori, with the apparent indignation of a man whose honour has been outraged. Beginning to feel the danger of his position, no doubt, he was desirous of effecting his escape. At the moment when he was trying to open the door, it opened, and he found himself face to face with Sir Walter Murphy."

Rodolph ceased reading, held out his hand to the squire, and said,—

"Well done, my good old friend; your presence must have crushed the scoundrel!"

"That's precisely the word, monseigneur. He turned livid, receded a couple of paces, looking at me aghast; he seemed thunderstruck. To find me at the further extremity of Normandy, in such a moment, he must have thought he had a terrible dream. But go on, monseigneur; you will see that this infernal Comtesse d'Orbigny had her share of the overwhelming shame, thanks to what you told me as to her visit to the charlatan Bradamanti—Polidori—in the house in the Rue du Temple;

for, after all, it was you who acted in this, I assure you, and you came in most happily and opportunely to the rescue on this occasion."

Rodolph smiled, and continued reading Madame d'Harville's letter.

"At the sight of Sir Walter Murphy Polidori was panic-struck; my stepmother went on from one surprise to another; my father, agitated at this scene, weakened by his malady, was compelled to sit down in an arm-chair. Sir Walter double-locked the door by which he had entered; and placing himself before that which led to the next apartment, that Doctor Polidori might not escape, he said to my poor father, with a tone of the utmost respect, 'A thousand pardons, Monsieur le Comte, for the liberty I take, but an imperious necessity, dictated by your interest alone (and which you will speedily recognise), compels me to act thus. My name is Sir Walter Murphy, as this wretch can testify, who at the sight of me trembles in every limb. I am the private adviser of his Royal Highness Monseigneur the Grand Duke Regnant of Gerolstein.' 'Quite true!' stammered forth Doctor Polidori, overcome with fright. 'But then, sir, what have you come here for? what seek you?' 'Sir Walter Murphy,' I observed, addressing my father, 'is here with me to unmask the wretches whose victim you have so nearly been.' Then handing the phial to Sir Walter, I added, 'I was suddenly tempted to seize on this phial at the moment when Doctor Polidori was about to pour some drops of the liquor it contains into a draught he was about to offer to my father.' 'A practitioner in the neighbouring village shall analyse before you the contents of this bottle, which I will deposit in your hands, M. le Comte: and if it is proved to contain a slow and sure poison,' said Sir Walter Murphy to my father, 'you cannot have any further doubt as to the dangers you have run, and which the tender care of your daughter will most happily have averted.' My poor father looked by turns at his wife, Doctor Polidori, and Sir Walter, with an air of doubt and anxiety; his features betrayed indescribable anguish. No doubt but he resisted with all his might increasing and terrible suspicions, fearing to be obliged to confess the infamy of my mother-in-law. At length, concealing his head in his hands, he exclaimed, 'Oh, this is, indeed, horrible!—impossible! Am I in a dream?' 'No, it is no dream!' cried my stepmother, audaciously; 'nothing can be more real than this atrocious calumny, concerted beforehand to destroy an unhappy woman, whose only crime is that of consecrating her whole existence to you. Come, come, my dear, do not remain a moment longer here!' she continued, addressing my father; 'I do not suppose that your daughter will have the insolence to retain you here against your will.' 'Yes, yes, let me go!' said my father, highly excited; 'all this is not true—cannot be true! I will not hear any more, my brain cannot endure it. Fearful misgivings would arise in my mind, which would embitter the few days I have still to live, and nothing could console me for so horrible a discovery.' My father seemed to suffer so much, to be so despairing, that, at all hazards, I resolved on putting an end to this scene, which was so acutely trying for him. Sir Walter guessed my desire, but desirous of full and entire justice, he replied to my father, 'But a few words more, M. le Comte. You will, no doubt, suffer chagrin of a most painful kind, when you detect in the

woman's conduct, whom you believe attached to you by gratitude, a system of most atrocious ingratitude—in herself a hypocritical monster.

But you will find your consolation in the affections of your daughter, who has never failed you.' 'This passes all bounds!' cried my stepmother, with rage. 'And by what right, sir, and on what proofs, dare you to base such infamous calumnies? You say the phial contains poison? I deny it, and will deny it until you prove the contrary. And even supposing Doctor Polidori has by mistake *confounded one medicine with another*, is that a reason why you should dare to accuse me of having sought—desired to be his accomplice? Oh! no, no! I cannot go on!—an idea so horrible is already a crime! Once again, sir, I defy you to say upon what proofs you and madame here dare rely to support this shameful calumny!' said my stepmother, with incredible audacity. 'Yes, on what proofs?' exclaimed my poor father; 'the torture I undergo must have an end.' 'I am not here, sir, without proofs, M. le Comte,' replied Sir Walter; 'and these proofs, the answer of this wretch shall supply to you instantly.' Then Sir Walter spoke in German to Doctor Polidori, who seemed to have suddenly assumed a little assurance, but lost it as soon."

"What did you say to him?" inquired Rodolph of the squire, pausing from his perusal of the letter.

"A few significant words, monseigneur, something like this. 'You have escaped by flight from the sentence passed upon you by law and justice in the Grand Duchy; you live in the Rue du Temple, under the false name of Bradamanti: we know the infamous calling you pursue there. You poisoned the count's first wife. Three days since Madame d'Orbigny went to find you, in order to bring you here to poison her husband. His royal highness is in Paris, and has proofs of all I now aver.

If you confess the truth in order to confound this wretched woman, you may hope, not for pardon, but for an amelioration of the punishment you deserve. You will accompany me to Paris, where I will deposit you in a safe place, until his royal highness decides on what shall be done with you. If not, one of two things: either his royal highness will demand and obtain your delivery up to him, or this very moment I will send for the nearest magistrate, this phial containing the poison shall be handed to him, you will be apprehended on the spot, and a search be made instantly at your domicile in the Rue du Temple; you know how utterly that must compromise you, and then the justice of the French courts will take its course. Choose therefore.' These disclosures, accusations, and threats, which he knew to be so well founded, succeeding each other thus rapidly, overwhelmed the scoundrel, who did not dream of my being so thoroughly informed. In the hope of diminishing his expected punishment, he did not hesitate to sacrifice his accomplice, and replied to me, 'Interrogate me, and I will disclose the whole truth as regards this woman.'"

"Capital! excellent! my dear Murphy. I expected no less of you."

"During my conversation with Polidori, the features of Madame d'Harville's stepmother became greatly agitated. Although she did not understand German, she saw, by the increasing dejection of her accomplice, by his deprecating attitude, that I controlled him. In a state of fearful anxiety, she endeavoured to catch Polidori's glance, in order to inspire him with courage, or implore his discretion, but he carefully avoided looking towards her."

"And the count?"

"His agitation was inexpressible! with his clenched hands he grasped convulsively the arms of his chair, the perspiration stood on his brow, and he scarcely breathed, whilst his burning and fixed eyes never quitted mine: his agony was equal to his wife's. The remainder of Madame d'Harville's letter will tell you the conclusion of this painful scene, monseigneur."

Rodolph continued the perusal of Madame d'Harville's letter:—

"After a conversation in German, which lasted for some minutes, between Sir Walter Murphy and Polidori, Sir Walter said to the latter, 'Now reply. Was it not madame,' and he looked towards my stepmother, 'who, during the illness of the count's first wife, introduced you to him as a physician?' 'Yes, it was!' replied Polidori. 'In order that you might serve the horrid projects of madame, were you not criminal enough to render mortal, by your deadly prescriptions, the malady of the Countess d'Orbigny, which was but slight in the first instance?' 'Yes!' replied Polidori. My father heaved a painful sigh, raised both his hands to heaven, and let them fall perfectly overcome. 'Lies and infamies!' cried my stepmother; 'it is all false—a plot got up to destroy me!' 'Silence, madame!' said Sir Walter Murphy, in an authoritative voice. Then continuing to address Polidori, 'Is it true that three days since madame was at your residence in the Rue du Temple, No. 17, where you lived under the assumed name of Bradamanti?' 'That is true.' 'Did not madame propose to you to come here to assassinate the Comte d'Or-

bigny, as you had assassinated his wife?' 'Alas! I cannot deny it!' said Polidori. At this overwhelming revelation my father rose up, then extending his arms to me, he exclaimed, in a broken voice, 'In the name of your unfortunate mother, pardon! pardon! I made her suffer much, but

I swear to you I was a stranger to the crime which led her to the tomb!' and before I could prevent it, my father fell at my knees. When Sir Walter and I raised him, he had fainted. I rang for the servants, Sir Walter took Polidori by the arm and led him out of the room with him, saying to my stepmother, 'Believe me, madame, it is best for you to leave this house within an hour, otherwise I will deliver you up to justice.' The wretched woman left the room in a state of rage and affright, which you will easily conceive. When my father recovered his senses, all that

had occurred seemed to him a horrid dream. I was under the sad necessity of imparting to him my first suspicions as to my mother's premature death, suspicions which your knowledge of Doctor Polidori's earlier crimes had converted into certainty. I also told him how my stepmother had persecuted me to the time of my marriage, and what had been her object in making me marry M. d'Harville. In proportion as my father had shewn himself weak with respect to this woman, so was he now pitiless towards her. He was desirous of handing Madame d'Orbigny over to the tribunals. I represented to him the horrible scandal of such a process, the publicity of which must be so distressing to him; and I induced him to allow her as much as was requisite for her to live upon. I had considerable difficulties in persuading my father to these terms, and he then wished me to dismiss her. This task was so painful, that I requested Sir Walter to perform it for me, which he did."

"I consented with pleasure," interrupted Murphy.

"And what said this woman?"

"Madame d'Harville kindly solicited a pension of a hundred louis for this woman: this appeared to me not only kindness, but weakness; it was bad enough to allow her to escape from justice; and the count agreeing with me, it was arranged that we should give her in all twenty-five louis to maintain her until she should find some occupation. 'And to what occupation can I, the Countess d'Orbigny, turn?' she asked me, insolently.

'*Ma foi!* that is your affair—you may do as a nurse or housekeeper; but take my advice and seek some humbler, more obscure occupation, for if you have the daring to mention your name—a name which you owe to a crime—people will be astonished to see the Countess d'Orbigny reduced to such a condition; they will then begin to make inquiries, and you may judge what will be the result, if you are so indiscreet as to say one word of the past. Hide yourself, therefore, at a distance—try and become forgotten; become Madame Pierre or Madame Jacques, and repent, if you can.' 'And do you suppose, sir,' she said, having, no doubt, resolved on a piece of stage effect—'do you suppose that I shall not sue for the advantage which my marriage-settlement awards me?' 'Why, madame, nothing can be more just: it will be dishonourable of M. d'Orbigny not to execute his promises, and forget all you have done—and particularly all you wished to do towards him. Go to law—go to law! try for justice, and, no doubt, it will right you with your husband.' A quarter of an hour after our conversation the wretch of a woman was on the road to the neighbouring town."

"You are right, it is painful to leave such an abandoned creature unpunished, but a law proceeding is impossible."

"I easily persuaded my father to leave Aubiers the same day," resumed Rodolph, continuing the perusal of Madame d'Harville's letter, "as too many painful feelings were excited by his being where he was. His weak health will be benefited by a few days' change of air and scene, as the doctor saw, whom Polidori had succeeded, and for whom I sent from the neighbouring town. My father wished him to analyse the contents of the phial, without giving him any information as to what had passed. The doctor informed us that he must do this at home, and that in two hours we should know the result of his scrutiny; which was that several doses of this liquor, composed with devilish skill, would, within a certain time, cause death, without leaving any traces beyond those of an ordinary malady, which he mentioned. In a few hours, monseigneur, I go with my father and daughter to Fontainebleau, where we shall remain for some time; then my father wishes to return to Paris, but not to my house, for I could not reside there after the late appalling event. As I mentioned in the beginning of my letter, monseigneur, facts prove all I shall owe to your inexhaustible care and solicitude. Forewarned by you, aided by your advice, strong in the assistance of your excellent and high-couraged Sir Walter, I have been enabled to snatch my father from certain death, and am again assured of his love. Adieu, monseigneur, it is impossible for me to say more; my heart is too full, and I explain but faintly all I feel. "D'Orbigny d'Harville.

"I open my letter to repair something I had, I regret to say, forgotten. According to your noble suggestion, I went to the prison of Saint-Lazare, to visit the poor women prisoners, and I found there an unhappy girl in whom you are interested. Her angelic mildness, her pious resignation, were the admiration of the respectable women who superintend the prisoners. To say that she is called La Goualeuse is to urge you to obtain her liberty instantly. The poor girl will tell you under what circumstances

she was carried off from the asylum in which you had placed her, and was put in prison, where, at least, the candour and sweetness of her disposition have been appreciated. Permit me, also, to recall to you my two future *protégées*, the unhappy mother and daughter despoiled by the notary Ferrand, where are they? I pray of you to try and discover them, so that on my return to Paris, I may pay the debt I have contracted towards all unfortunate beings."

"What! has La Goualeuse, then, left the Bouqueval farm?" inquired Murphy, as much astonished as Rodolph at this fresh discovery.

"Just now I was informed that she had been seen quitting Saint-Lazare," replied Rodolph. "I am quite bewildered on the subject; Madame Georges' silence surprises and disturbs me. Poor little Fleur-de-Marie, what fresh disasters can have befallen her? Send a man on horseback directly to the farm, and write to Madame Georges that I beg of her to come to Paris instantly. Request M. de Graün to procure for me a permission to visit Saint-Lazare. By what Madame d'Harville says to me, Fleur-de-Marie must be confined there. Yet no," he added, "she cannot be there, for Rigolette saw her leave the prison with an aged woman. Could it be Madame Georges? if not, who could be the woman that accompanied La Goualeuse?"

"Patience, monseigneur; before the evening you will know all about it. Then to-morrow you can interrogate that vagabond Polidori, who has, he assures me, important disclosures to make,—but to you alone."

"This interview will be most odious to me!" said Rodolph, sorrowfully; "for I have never seen this man since the fatal day when I——"

Rodolph, unable to finish, hid his face in his hands.

"But, monseigneur, why accede to Polidori's request? threaten him with the justice of the French law, or immediate surrender to your authority, and then he will reveal to me what he now declares he will only reveal to you."

"You are right, my worthy friend; for the presence of this wretch would make my terrible recollections even still more distressing, connected as they are with incurable griefs—from my father's death to that of my daughter. I know not how it is, but as I advance in life the more I seem to miss that dear child. How I should have adored her! how very dear and precious to me she would have been, this offspring of my first love, of my earliest and purest beliefs—or, rather, my young illusions! I should have poured out on this innocent creature those treasures of affection of which her hateful mother is so unworthy; and it seems to me that, as I have dreamt, this child, by the beauty of her mind, the charm of her qualities, would have soothed and softened all my griefs, all these pangs of remorse, which are, alas! attached to her fatal birth."

"Monseigneur, I see with grief the increasing empire which these regrets, as vain as they are bitter, assume over your mind."

After some moments' silence, Rodolph said to Murphy,—

"I will now make a confession to you, my old friend. I love—yes, I passionately love—a woman worthy of the noblest, the most devoted affection. Since my heart has again expanded to all the sweetness of love, since I am thus again affected by tender emotions, I feel more deeply than ever the loss of my daughter. I might have feared that an attachment of the heart would weaken the bitterness of my regrets. It is not so: all my loving qualities—my affections—are but the keener. I feel myself better, more charitable; and more than ever is it afflicting to me not to have my daughter to adore."

"Nothing more easily explained, monseigneur—forgive me the comparison—but, as certain men have a joyous and benevolent intoxication, so you have good and generous love."

"Still my hatred of the wicked has become more intense; my aversion for Sarah increases, in proportion, no doubt, to the grief I experience at my daughter's death. I imagine to myself that that wretched mother must have neglected her, and that, when once her ambitious hopes were ruined by my marriage, the countess, in her pitiless selfishness, abandoned our daughter to mercenary hands, and, perhaps, my child died from actual neglect. It is my fault, also. I did not then think of the sacred duties which paternity imposes. When Sarah's real character was suddenly revealed to me, I ought instantly to have taken my daughter from her, and watched over her with love and anxiety. I ought to have foreseen that the countess would make but a very unnatural mother. It is my fault—yes, indeed, my fault."

"Monseigneur, grief distracts you! Could you, after the sad event you know of, delay for a day the long journey imposed on you, as——"

"As an expiator! you are right, my friend," said Rodolph, greatly agitated.

"You have not heard any thing of the Countess Sarah since my departure, monseigneur?"

"No; since those infamous plots which twice nearly destroyed Madame d'Harville, I have heard nothing of her. Her presence here is hateful to me—oppresses me; it seems as though my evil demon was near me, and some new misfortune threatens me."

"Patience, patience, monseigneur! fortunately Germany is forbidden ground to her, and Germany awaits us."

"Yes, we shall go very soon. At least during my short residence in Paris, I shall have accomplished a sacred vow, and have made some steps in the meritorious path which an august and merciful will has traced for my redemption. As soon as Madame Georges' son is restored to her tender arms, free and innocent; as soon as Jacques Ferrand shall be convicted and punished for his crimes; as soon as I am assured of the good prosperity of all the honest and hard-working creatures who, by their resignation, courage, and probity, have deserved my interest, we will return to Germany, and then my journey will not have been wholly unfruitful."

"Particularly if you achieve the exposure of that abominable wretch, Jacques Ferrand, monseigneur,—the angular stone, the pivot on which turn so many crimes."

"Although the end justifies the means, and scruples with such a scoundrel are absurd, yet I sometimes regret that I have allowed Cecily to become an instrument in working out this just and avenging reparation."

"She ought to be here very shortly."

"She has arrived."

"Cecily?"

"Yes: I refused to see her. De Graün has given her ample instructions, and she has promised to comply with them."

"Will she keep that promise?"

"Why, every thing conspires to make me think so. There is the

hope of ameliorating her future condition, and the fear of being instantly sent back to Germany to prison ; for De Graün will not lose sight of her, and the least defection on her part will cause her being handed over to justice."

"True, she comes here as an escaped criminal, and when we know the crimes that have led to her perpetual imprisonment, she would be at once surrendered to our demand."

"And then even if it were not her interest to aid our schemes, the task which is assigned to her being one which can only be effected by stratagem, perfidy, and the most devilish seduction, Cecily must be (and the baron assures me she really is) overjoyed at such an opportunity for playing off those infernal advantages with which she is so liberally endowed."

"Is she as handsome as she was, monseigneur ?"

"De Graün declares that she is more attractive than ever ; he told me that he was really quite dazzled at her beauty, to which the Alsatian costume she had chosen gave even more piquancy. The glance of this devil in petticoats, he says, has still the same really magic expression."

"Why, monseigneur, I have never been what is called a dissipated fellow, a man without heart or conduct, but if at twenty years of age I had met with Cecily, even knowing her then to be as dangerous, as wicked as I do now, I assure you I would not have answered for myself, if I had been for any time exposed to the fire of her large, black, and brilliant eyes, sparkling in the centre of her pale and ardent countenance. Yes, by heaven ! I dare not think of the extremities into which so fatal an amour might have urged me."

"I am not astonished, my dear Murphy, for I know this woman. Moreover, the baron was really frightened at the quickness with which Cecily understood—or, rather, guessed—the part at once *inciting* and Platonic, which she was to play with the notary."

"But will she, think you, be introduced as easily as you wish, monseigneur, by the intervention of Madame Pipelet ? individuals like Jacques Ferrand, are so suspicious."

"I had relied, with reason, on the sight of Cecily to overcome and dissipate the notary's distrust."

"What ! has he already seen her ?"

"Yesterday. And from what Madame Pipelet told me, I have no doubt but he was fascinated by the Creole, for he instantly took her into service."

"Then, monseigneur, the game is won, and ours."

"I hope so. A ferocious cupidity, a brutal passion, have impelled the injurer of Louise Morel to the most odious crimes. It is in his passion and his cupidity that he shall find the terrible punishment of his crimes—a punishment which, moreover, shall not be without fruit for his victims, for you know the aim of all the Creole's wiles."

"Cecily ! Cecily ! never did greater wickedness, never more dangerous corruption, never blacker soul have served for the accomplishment of a more strict morality, a more just result ! And David, monseigneur, what does he say to this arrangement ?"

"Approves of every thing. At the pitch of contempt and horror

which he has reached for this creature, he sees in her only the instrument of a just vengeance. 'If this accursed woman ever could deserve any commiseration after all the ill she has done me,' he said to me, 'it would be by devoting herself to the remorseless punishment of this scoundrel, whose exterminating demon she may become.'"

A servant having knocked at the door, Murphy went out, but soon returned with two letters, only one of which was for Rodolph."

"A line from Madame Georges," he said, as he hastily perused it.

"Well, monseigneur, and La Goualeuse?"

"There can be no further doubt," exclaimed Rodolph, after having read, "there is some dark plot a-foot. On the evening of the day when the poor girl disappeared from the farm, and at the instant when Madame Georges was about to inform me of this event, a man unknown to her, sent express and on horseback, came as from me to tell her that I was aware of the sudden disappearance of Fleur-de-Marie, and that in a few days I should take her back to the farm. In spite of this Madame Georges, uneasy at my silence with respect to her *protégée*, cannot, as she says, resist the desire to hear how her dear daughter is, for so she calls her."

"It is very strange, monseigneur."

"What could be the motive for carrying off Fleur-de-Marie?"

"Monseigneur!" said Murphy, suddenly, "the Countess Sarah is no stranger to this carrying off."

"Sarah! And what makes you think so?"

"Compare this event with her denunciations against Madame d'Harville."

"You are right!" cried Rodolph, struck with a sudden light, "it is evident—now I understand. Yes, constantly the one calculation. The countess persists in thinking that by breaking down all the affections which she supposes me to form, she will make me feel the necessity of attaching myself to her. This is as odious as it is absurd. Still such unworthy persecution must be put a stop to. It is not only myself, but all that deserve respect, interest, and pity, that this woman assails. Send M. de Graün instantly and officially to the countess, and let him say that I have the certain assurance that she has been instrumental in carrying off Fleur-de-Marie, and if she does not give me at once such information as is necessary for me to find the poor girl, I will shew no mercy; and then M. de Graün will go to the law-officers of the crown."

"According to Madame d'Harville's letter, La Goualeuse must be in Saint-Lazare."

"Yes, but Rigolette declares that she saw her free, and quit the prison. There is some mystery which I must clear up."

"I will instantly go and give the Baron de Graun your orders, monseigneur. But allow me to open this letter, which comes from my correspondent at Marseilles, to whom I had recommended the Chourineur, as he was to facilitate the passage of the poor devil to Algeria."

"Well, has he set sail?"

"Monseigneur, it is really singular!"

"What is it?"

"After having waited for a long time at Marseilles for a ship to convey him to Algeria, the Chourineur, who seemed every day more

sad and serious, suddenly protested, on the very day fixed for his embarkation, that he should prefer returning to Paris."

"What a whim!"

"Although my correspondent had, as agreed, placed a considerable sum at the disposal of the Chourineur, he had only taken sufficient for his return to Paris, where he must shortly arrive."

"Then he will explain to us his change of resolution. But despatch De Graün immediately to the Countess Macgregor, and go yourself to Saint-Lazare, and inquire about Fleur-de-Marie."

* * * * * *

After the lapse of an hour the Baron de Graün returned from the Countess Sarah Macgregor's. In spite of his habitual and official *sang-froid*, the diplomatist seemed overwhelmed; the groom of the chambers had scarcely admitted him before Rodolph observed his paleness.

"Well, De Graün, what ails you? Have you seen the countess?"

"Your royal highness must prepare for very painful intelligence—so unexpected—the Countess Macgregor——"

"The countess, then, is dead?"

"No, but her life is despaired of; she has been stabbed with a stiletto."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Rodolph. "Who committed the crime?"

"That is not ascertained; the murder was accompanied with robbery; a large quantity of jewels have been stolen."

"And how is she now?"

"She has not recovered her senses yet; her brother is in despair."

"Send some one daily to make inquiries, my dear De Graün."

At this moment Murphy entered, having returned from Saint-Lazare.

"Sad news!" said Rodolph to him; "Sarah has been stabbed."

"Ah, monseigneur, though very guilty, one must still pity her."

"Yes, such a fearful end! And La Goualeuse?"

"Set at liberty by the intercession of Madame d'Harville."

"That is impossible! for Madame d'Harville entreats me to take the necessary steps for getting the poor, unhappy girl out of prison."

"Yet an elderly woman came to Saint-Lazare, bringing an order to set Fleur-de-Marie at liberty, and they both quitted the prison together."

"As Rigolette said. But this elderly woman, who can she be? The Countess Sarah alone can clear this up, and she is in no state to afford us particulars."

"But her brother, Tom Seyton, may throw some light on it, he has always been in his sister's confidence."

"His sister is dying, and if there is any fresh plot, he will not say a word. But," added Rodolph, "we must learn the name of the person who liberated Fleur-de-Marie, and then we shall arrive at something."

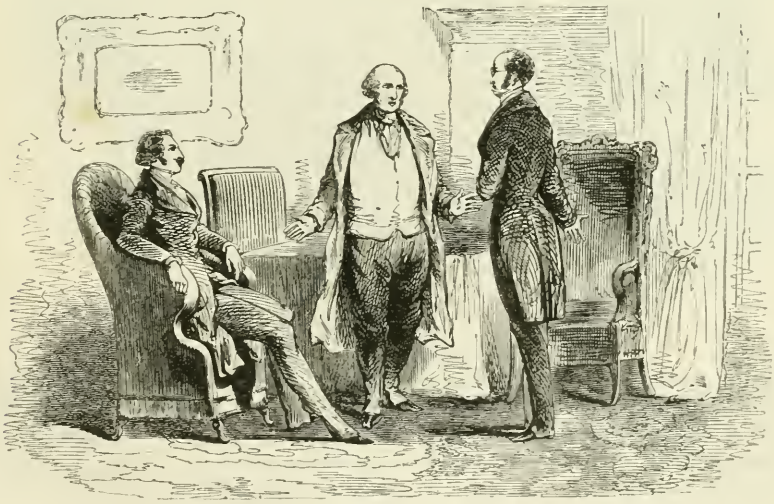
"True, monseigneur."

"Try, then, and find out this person, my dear De Graün; and if you do not succeed, put your M. Badinot on the scent."

"Your royal highness may rely on my zeal."

"Upon my word, monseigneur," said Murphy, "it is, perhaps, fortunate that the Chourineur returns to us, his services may be useful."

"You are right: and now I am impatient to see my brave preserver arrive in Paris, for I never can forget that I owe my life to him."



CHAPTER XLII.

THE CLERKS' OFFICE.

Several days had elapsed since Jacques Ferrand had taken Cecily into his service. We will conduct the reader (who already knows the place) into the notary's office, whilst his clerks are at breakfast. Unheard-of, extravagant, wonderful thing! Instead of the meagre and repulsive broth brought each morning to these young men by the *late* Madame

Séraphin, an enormous cold roast turkey, placed in a large box, was enthroned in the centre of one of the office-tables, flanked by two new loaves, a Dutch cheese, and three bottles of wine; an ancient leaden inkstand served to hold a mixture of pepper and salt. Each clerk, provided with a knife and a strong appetite, awaited the arrival of the head

clerk with hungry impatience, without whom they could not, without a breach of etiquette, begin to breakfast. A revolution so radical in Jacques Ferrand's office bespoke some extraordinary domestic mutation. The following conversation may throw some light on this phenomenon.

"Here is a turkey who did not expect when he was ushered into life ever to appear on the breakfast-table of our governor's clerks."

"No more than the governor, when he was ushered into the life of a notary, expected to give his clerks a turkey for breakfast."

"But, at least, the turkey is ours!" said the junior *fag* of the office, with a greedy grin.

"*Hop-the-gutter*, my friend, you forget yourself; this poultry is and must be a stranger to you."

"And, like a good Frenchman, you should have a wholesome hatred of the stranger."

"All that will come to your share may be his feet."

"Emblem of the velocity with which you run on the office errands."

"I thought I might at least have a right to the carcass to pick!" muttered Hop-the-gutter.

Hop-the-Gutter.

"Perchance, as an excessive favour, but not as a right; just as with the Charter of 1814, which was but another carcass of liberty!" said the Mirabeau of the office.

"Talking of carcasses," observed one youth, with brutal insensibility, "may Heaven receive the soul of Madame Séraphin! For since she was drowned in her water-party of pleasure, we are no longer condemned to eternal *cag-mag*."

"And, for a whole week, the governor, instead of giving us breakfast——"

"Allows us each two francs a-day."

"It was that which made me say 'Heaven receive the soul of Mother Séraphin!'"

"Talking of Madame Séraphin, who has seen the servant who has come in her place?"

"The Alsacian girl whom the portress of the house in which poor Louise lived brought one evening, as the porter told us?"

"Yes."

"*Parbleu!* it is quite impossible to get a glimpse of her; for the governor is more resolute than ever in preventing us from entering into the pavilion in the courtyard."

"And besides, as it is the porter who now cleans out the office, how can one see this damsel?"

"Well, I've seen her."

"You?"

"When I say I've seen her, I've seen her cap; such a rum cap!"

"Oh, pooh! What sort?"

"It was cherry-coloured velvet, I think; a kind of skull-cap like the 'buy-a-broom' girls wear."

"Like the Alsaciennes? Why, that's simple enough, as she is an Alsacienne!"

"I was passing across the yard the day before yesterday, and she was leaning with her back against one of the windows of the ground-floor."

"What! the yard?"

"No, donkey, no—the servant! The panes of the lower part are so dirty that I could not see much of the Alsacienne; but those in the middle of the window were not so grubby, and I saw her cherry-coloured cap and a profusion of curling hair as black as jet, for she had her head dressed *à la Titus*."

"I'm sure the governor has not seen even as much as that through his spectacles; for he is one who, as they say, if he were left alone with one woman on the earth, then the world would end."

"That is not astonishing. '*He laughs best who laughs last!*' And the more so, as '*Punctuality is the politeness of monarchs!*'"

"Jupiter! how stupid Chalamel is when he likes!"

"Deuce take it! *Tell me where you go, and I'll tell you who you are!*"

"Beautiful!"

"As for me, I think it is superstition which makes our governor more and more hoggish."

"And, perhaps, it is as a penitence that he gives us forty sous a-day for our breakfast."

"He must, indeed, have taken leave of his senses."

"Or be ill."

"I have thought him very much bewildered these many days past."

"It is not that we see so much of him. He who, for our misery, was in his study at sunrise, and always at our backs, is now two days without even poking his nose into the office."

"That gives the head clerk so much to do."

"And we are obliged to die of hunger waiting for him this morning."

"What a change in the office!"

"How poor Germain would be astonished if any one told him, 'Only

Germain.

think, old fellow, of the governor giving us forty sous for our breakfast.' 'Pooh! impossible!' 'Quite possible! And I, Chalamel, announce the fact in my own proper person.' 'What, you want to make me laugh?' 'Yes. Well, this is the way it came about. For the two or three days which followed the death of Madame Séraphin we had no breakfast at all; and, in one respect, that was an improvement, because it was less nasty, but, in another, our refection cost us money. Still we were patient, saying, 'The governor has no servant or housekeeper; as soon as he gets one we shall resume the filthy paste gruel.' No, by no means, my

dear Germain; the governor has a servant, and yet our breakfast continued buried in the wave of oblivion. Then I was appointed as a deputation to inform the governor of the griefs of our stomachs. He was with the chief clerk. 'I will not feed you any longer in the morning,' he replied, in his harsh tone, and as if thinking of something else; 'my servant has no time to prepare your breakfast.' 'But, sir, it was agreed that you should find us in breakfasts.' 'Well, send for your breakfasts from some house, and I will pay for it. How much is sufficient—forty sous each?' he added; all the time evidently thinking of something else, and saying forty sous as he would say twenty sous or a hundred sous. 'Yes, sir, forty sous will be sufficient,' cried I, catching the ball at the bound. 'Be it so; the head clerk will pay you and settle with me.' And so saying, the governor respectfully slammed the door in my face.' You must own, messieurs, that Germain would be most extraordinarily astonished at the liberality of the governor."

"Seriously, I think the governor is ill. For the last ten days he has scarcely been recognisable; his cheeks are so furrowed you could hide your fist in them."

"And so absent: you should just see him. The other day he lifted his spectacles to read a deed, and his eyes were as red and glaring as fiery coals."

"He was right. '*Short reckonings make long friends!*'"

"Let me say a word. I will tell you, gentlemen, something very strange. I handed this deed to the governor, and it was topsy-turvy."

"The governor?—how strange! What could he mean by topsy-turvying thus? Enough to choke him, unless, as you say, his habits are so completely altered."

"Oh, what a fellow you are, Chalamel! I say I gave him the deed wrong end up'ards."

"Wasn't he in a rage?"

"Not the slightest. He did not even notice it, but kept his great red eyes fixed upon it for at least ten minutes, and then handed me back the deed, saying, 'Very good!'"

"What, still topsy-turvy?"

"Yes."

"Then he couldn't have read it?"

"*Pardieu!* not unless he can read upside down."

"How odd!"

"The governor looked so dull and cross at the moment that I did not dare to say a word, and so I left him, just as if nothing had occurred."

"Well, four days ago I was in the head-clerk's office; there came a client, then two or three clients with whom the governor had appointments. They got tired of waiting; and, at their request, I went and knocked at his study-door. No answer; so in I went."

"Well?"

"M. Jacques Ferrand had his arms crossed on his desk, and his bald and not over delicate forehead leaning on his hands. He never stirred."

"Was he asleep?"

"I thought so, and went towards him: 'Sir, there are clients waiting with whom you have made appointments.' He didn't stir. 'Sir!' No

answer. Then I touched his shoulder, and he bounced up as if the devil had bitten him. In his start his large green spectacles fell from his eyes on to his nose, and I saw—you'll never believe it——"

"Well, what?"

"Tears."

"Oh, what nonsense!"

"Quite true."

"What! the governor snivel? No, I won't have that."

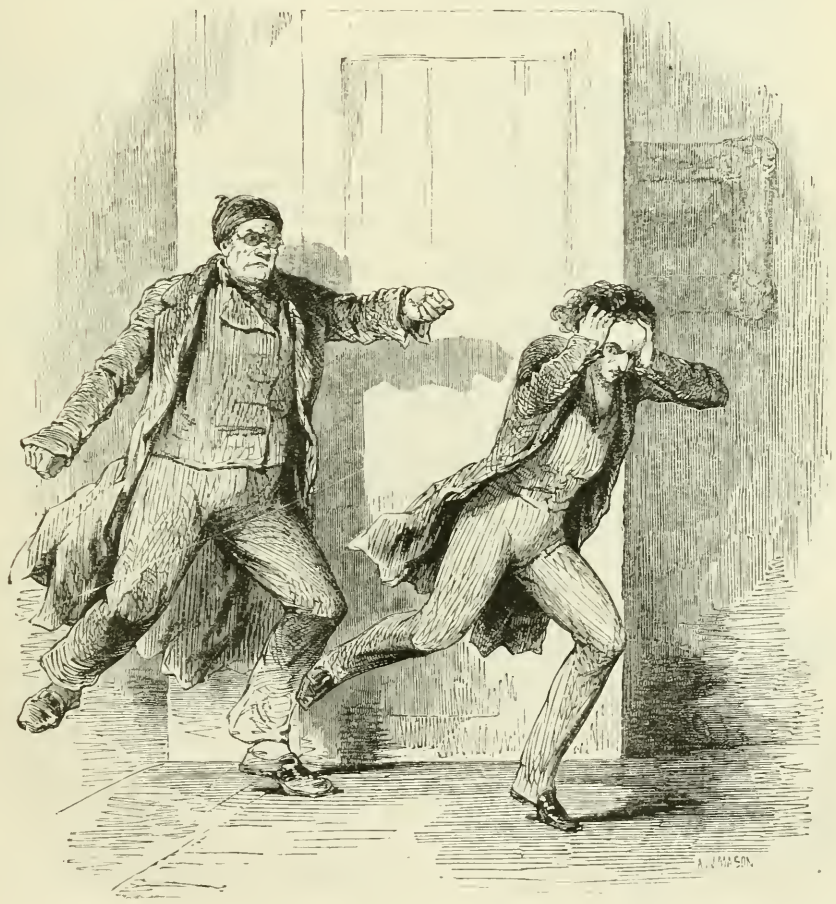
"When that's the case why cockchafers will play the cornet-à-piston."

"And cocks and hens wear top-boots."

"Ta, ta, ta, ta; all your folly will not prevent my having seen what I did see as plain as I see you."

"Weeping?"

"Yes, weeping. And he was in such a precious rage at being surprised in this lachrymose mood that he adjusted his spectacles in great haste, and said to me, 'Get out—get out!' 'But, sir——' 'Get out!' 'Three



clients are waiting to whom you have given appointments, and——' 'I have not time; let them go to the devil along with you!' Then he got up in a desperate rage to turn me out, but I didn't wait, but went and dismissed the clients, who were not by any means satisfied; but, for the honour of the office, I told them that the governor had the hooping-cough."

This interesting conversation was interrupted by the head-clerk, who entered apparently quite overcome. His arrival was hailed by general acclamation, and all eyes were sympathetically turned towards the turkey with impatient anxiety.

"Without saying a word, seigneur, you have kept us waiting an infernally long while," said Chalamel.

"Take care! another time our appetite will not remain so subordinate."

"Well, gents, it was no fault of mine. I have had much to annoy me —more than you have. On my word and honour, the governor must be going mad."

"Didn't I say so?"

"But that need not prevent one eating."

"On the contrary."

"We can talk just as well with something in our mouths."

"We can talk better," cried Hop-the-Gutter; whilst Chalamel, dissecting the turkey, said to the head-clerk,—

"What makes you think that the governor is mad?"

"We have a right to suppose he is perfectly beside himself when he allows us forty sous a-head for our daily breakfast."

"I confess that has surprised me as much as yourselves, gents. But that is nothing—absolutely nothing—to what has just now occurred."

"Really?"

"What! has the unhappy old gent become so decidedly lunatic that he insists on our dining at the Cadran Bleu every day at his expense?"

"Theatre in the evening?"

"Then coffee, with punch to follow?"

"And then——"

"Gents, laugh as much as you please; but the scene I have just witnessed is rather alarming than pleasant."

"Well, then, relate this scene to us."

"Yes, do. Don't mind your breakfast," observed Chalamel; "we are all ears."

"And jaws, my lads. I think I see you whilst I am talking working away with your teeth; and the turkey would be finished before my tale. By your leave, patience, and the story shall come in with the dessert."

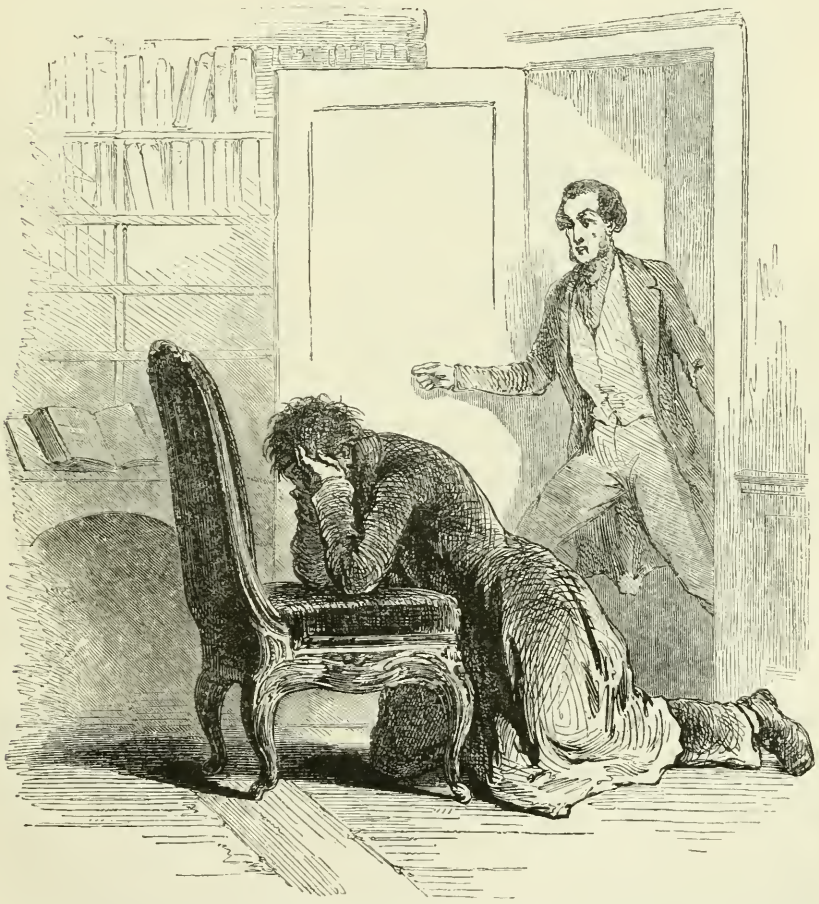
Whether it was the spur of appetite or curiosity which incited the young men we will not decide, but they went through their gastronomic operation with such celerity that the moment for the head-clerk's history came in no time. In order that they might not be surprised by their employer, they sent Hop-the-Gutter into the adjoining room as a sentinel, having liberally supplied him with the carcass and drumsticks of the bird.

The head-clerk then said to his colleagues, "You must know, in the

first place, the porter has been very uneasy, for he has frequently seen M. Ferrand, in spite of the cold and rain, pace the garden at night for a considerable time. Once he ventured to ask his master if he wanted any thing; but he sent him about his business in such a manner that he has not again ventured to intrude himself."

"Perhaps the governor is a sleep-walker?"

"That is not probable. But, to continue; a short time since I wanted his signature to several papers. As I was turning the handle of his door, I thought I heard some one speaking. I stopped, and made out two or three repressed sounds, like stifled groans. After pausing an instant in fear, I opened the door, and saw the governor kneeling on the floor; his forehead buried in his hands, and his elbows resting on the seat of one of his old arm-chairs."



"Oh, it's all plain enough: he has turned pious, and was saying an extra prayer."

"Well, then, it was a strong prayer enough. I heard stifled groans, and every now and then he murmured between his teeth '*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*' like a despairing man. Then—and this is very singular—in a movement which he made as if to tear his breast with his nails, his shirt came partly open, and I saw on his hairy chest a small red pocket-book fastened round his neck by a steel chain. When I saw that, I did not really know whether I ought to retreat or advance. I remained, however, very much embarrassed, when he rose and suddenly turned round, holding between his teeth an old check pocket-handerchief; his spectacles were left on the chair. Let me say, gents, that I never in my life saw such a figure; he looked like one of the damned. I retreated really in alarm. Then he——"

"Seized you by the throat?"

"You are quite wrong. He looked at me first with a bewildered air; then letting fall his handkerchief, he threw himself into my arms, exclaiming, '*Oh, I am very unhappy!*'"

"What a farce!"

"Well, but that did not prevent his voice—in spite of his death's-head look—from being so distressing, I may say so imploring——"

"Imploring! Come, come, no gammon! Why there is no night-owl with a cold in her head, which is not music to the governor's voice."

"That may be; but yet at this moment his voice was so plaintive that I was almost affected. 'Sir,' I said to him, 'believe me——' '*Let me!—let me!*' replied he, interrupting me. '*It is so consoling to be able to say to any one that we are suffering!*' He evidently mistook me for some other person. You may suppose that when he thus addressed me I felt sure it was a mistake, or that he had a brain-fever. I disengaged myself from him, saying, 'Sir, compose yourself, it is I!' Then he looked at me with a stupid air, and exclaimed, '*Who is it? Who's there? What do you want with me?*' And he passed, at each question, his hand over his brow, as if to dispel the cloud which obscured his mind."

"Which obscured his mind! Capital! well spoken! we'll get up a melodrama amongst us!

'Methinks a man with such a power of words,
Should try his hand at melodrame!'"

"Chalamel, will you be quiet?"

"What could ail the governor?"

"*Ma foi!* how can I tell? But of this I'm sure that when he recovers he'll sing to another tune, for he frowned terribly, and said to me sharply, without giving me time to reply, 'What did you come for? Have you been here long? Am I to be surrounded with spies? What did I say? Reply—answer!' *Ma foi!* he looked so savage that I replied, 'I heard nothing, sir; I only this moment entered.' 'You are not deceiving me?' 'No, sir.' 'Well, what do you want?' 'Some signatures, sir.' 'Give me the papers!' And then he signed and signed—without reading—half-a-dozen notarial deeds; he who never put his initials to a deed without spelling it over word by word, and twice over from one end to the other. I remarked that from time to time his hand relaxed in the middle of his signature, as if he were absorbed in some fixed idea; then

he went on signing very quick, and, as it were, convulsively. When all were signed he told me to retire, and I heard him descend the small staircase which leads from his room to the courtyard."

"I still ask what can be the matter with him?"

"Gentlemen, it is perhaps Madame Séraphin whom he regrets."

"He? What, he regret any one?"

"Now I think of it, the porter said that the curé of Bonne Nouvelle and the vicar had called several times to see the governor, and he was

denied to them. Is not that surprising?—they who almost lived here!"

"What puzzles me is to know what the workpeople are at."

"They have been working at the pavilion three days running."

"And one evening they brought furniture covered up with a carpet."

"Perhaps he feels remorse for having put Germain into prison?"

"Talking of Germain, he will have some fine recruits in his prison, poor fellow! for I read in the *Gazette des Tribunaux* that the band of robbers and assassins, whom they seized in the Champs Elysées, in one of the small underground public-houses, had been locked up in La Force."

"Poor Germain! what society for him!"

"Louise Morel, too, will have her share of the recruits; for in this gang, they say, there is a whole family of thieves."

"Then they will send the women to Saint-Lazare, where Louise is?"

"Perhaps it was some of that gang who stabbed the countess, one of the governor's clients. He has often sent me to inquire after the state of this countess, and seems much interested in her recovery."

"Did they let you enter the house and see the spot where the assassination was committed?"

"Oh no! I could not go further than the entrance; and the porter was not at all a person inclined to talk."

"Gents, gents, take your places; here's the gov'nor coming up!" shouted Hop-the-Gutter, coming into the office with the carcass still in his hand.

The young men instantly took their seats at their respective desks, over which they bent, handling their pens with great dexterity, whilst Hop-the-Gutter deposited his turkey's skeleton in a box filled with law-papers.

Jacques Ferrand entered the room. His red hair, mingled with grey, escaping from beneath an old black silk cap, fell in disorder down each side of his temples. Some of the veins which marbled his head appeared injected with blood, whilst his face, his flat nose, his furrowed cheeks, were all of ghastly paleness. The expression of his look, concealed by his large green spectacles, could not be seen; but the great alteration in the man's features announced the ravages of a consuming passion.

He crossed the office slowly, without saying a word to one of the clerks, or without even appearing to notice that they were there; then went into the room in which the chief clerk was employed, traversed it as well as his own cabinet, and again instantly descended the small staircase which led to the courtyard.

Jacques Ferrand having left all the doors open behind him, the clerks had a right to be astonished at the strange demeanour of their employer, who had come up one staircase and gone down another without pausing for a moment in any of the apartments he had mechanically traversed.

CHAPTER XLIII.

AVOID TEMPTATION!

It is night. Profound silence reigns in the pavilion inhabited by Jacques Ferrand, interrupted only at intervals by gusts of wind and the dashing of rain, which falls in torrents. These melancholy sounds seemed to render still more complete the solitude of this abode. In a sleeping-room in the first floor, very nicely and newly furnished, and covered with

a thick carpet, a young female is standing up before a fire-place, in which there is a cheerful blaze. It is strange, but in the centre of the door, carefully bolted, and which is opposite to the bed, is a small glass door, five or six inches square, which opens from the outside. A small reflecting lamp casts a half shadow in this chamber, hung with garnet-coloured

paper; the curtains of the bed and the window, as well as the cover of the large sofa, are of silk and woollen damask of the same colour.

We are precise in the details of this *demi-luxury* so recently imported into the notary's residence, because it announces a complete revolution in the habits of Jacques Ferrand, who, until now, was of the most sordid avarice, and of Spartan disregard (especially as it concerned others) to every thing that respected comfortable existence. It is on this garnet-coloured ground that was shadowed forth the figure of Cecily, which we will now attempt to paint.

Tall and graceful, the Creole was in the full flower of her age. Her spreading shoulders and hips made her waist appear so singularly small, that it seemed as if it could be easily spanned. As simple as it was coquettish, her Alsatian costume was of singular taste, somewhat theatrical—but for that reason more capable of producing the effect she desired. Her boddice, of black cassimere, half open on her full bosom, was very long-waisted, with tight sleeves, plain back, and slightly embroidered with purple wool down the seams, perfected by a row of small cut silver buttons. A short petticoat, of orange merino, which seemed of vast fulness, descended little lower than the knee; her stockings were of scarlet, with blue clocks, as we see them in the drawings of the old Flemish painters, who so complacently shew us the garters of their robust heroines. No artist ever drew more perfect legs than were those of Cecily: symmetrical and slim beneath the swelling calf, they terminated in a small foot, quite at ease, and yet restrained in a small slipper of black morocco, with silver buckles. Cecily was looking into the glass over the mantelpiece. The slope of her boddice displayed her elegant and dimpled neck of dazzling but not transparent whiteness.

Taking off her cap of cherry-coloured velvet to replace it with a kerchief, she displayed her thick and magnificent head of hair, of lustrous black, which, divided over her brows, and, naturally curling, came down only to the *necklace of Venus*, which unites the neck and shoulders. It is necessary to know the inimitable taste with which the Creoles twist round their heads their kerchiefs of bright hues, to have an idea of the graceful head-dress of Cecily, and the piquant contrast of this variegated covering of purple, blue, and orange, with the black silky tresses, which, escaping from beneath the tight fold of the nightkerchief, surrounded her pale but round and firm cheeks. With her two arms raised above her head, she proceeded with the ends of her fingers, as slender as spindles of ivory, to arrange a large rosette, placed very low on the left side, almost over the ear.

Cecily's features were such as once seen it is impossible ever to forget. A bold forehead, somewhat projecting, surmounts her face, which was a perfect oval—her pearly white complexion, the *satiny* freshness of the camelia leaf slightly touched by a sun-ray—her eyes, of almost disproportionate size, have a singular expression, for their iris, extremely large, black, and brilliant, hardly allow the blue transparency of the orbits, at the two extremities of the lids, fringed with long lashes, to be visible—her chin is very distinctly prominent—her nose, straight and thin, ends in two delicate nostrils, which dilate on the least emotion—her mouth, insolent and amorous, is of bright purple.

We must imagine this colourless countenance, with its bright black glance, its two red, pulpy, and humid lips, which glisten like wet coral. Such was Cecily. Her infamous instincts, at first repressed by her real attachment for David, not being developed till she reached Europe, *civilisation* and the influence of northern climates had tempered their violence.

We have already said that Cecily had scarcely reached Germany, when first seduced by a man of desperately depraved habits, she, unknown to David, who loved her with equal idolatry and blindness, exercised and turned to account, for a considerable time, all her seductive powers; but soon the scandal of her adventures was raised abroad, and such exposures ensued that she was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment.

To all this let there be joined a plastic, adroit, insinuating mind, an intelligence so wonderful, that in a year she spoke French and German with perfect ease, sometimes even with natural eloquence; then add a corrupted heart worthy of the courtesan queen of ancient Rome, an audacity and courage proof against every thing, instincts of diabolical wickedness, and then we may understand the new *servant* of Jacques Ferrand, the resolute being who had dared to venture into the wolf's den.

Yes, strange anomaly! on learning from M. de Graün the inciting and PLATONIC part she was to play with the notary, and what avenging ends were to be derived from her seductions, Cecily had promised to go through the character *with love*—or, rather, terrible hatred against Jacques Ferrand, being sincerely indignant at the recital of the infamous violence he had exercised against Louise,—a recital necessary to be unfolded to the Creole, to put her on her guard against the hypocritical attempts of this monster. A few retrospective words as to this latter are indispensable.

When Cecily was presented by Madame Pipelet as an orphan over whom she did not desire to maintain any right, any control, the notary was, perhaps, less smitten by the beauty of the Creole than fascinated by her irresistible look,—a look which, at the first interview, disturbed the reason of Jacques Ferrand.

We have already said, in reference to the insensate boldness of some of his words when conversing with Madame de Lucenay, that this man, usually so completely master of himself, so calm, so cunning, so subtle, forgot the cold calculations of his deep dissimulation when the demon of desire darkened his better sense.

Besides, he had no cause to distrust the *protégée* of Madame Pipelet. After her conversation with Alfred's spouse, Madame Séraphin had proposed to Jacques Ferrand a young girl, almost destitute, to replace Louise, and he had eagerly accepted the offer, in the hopes of taking advantage of the isolated and precarious position of his new servant. Moreover, far from being predisposed to mistrust, Jacques Ferrand found, in the march of events, fresh motives for security.

All succeeded to his utmost wishes. The death of Madame Séraphin released him from a dangerous accomplice—the death of Fleur-de-Marie (he believed her dead) delivered him from a living proof of one of his earliest crimes. Finally, thanks to the death of the Chouette, and the unexpected murder of the Countess Macgregor (whose life was despaired of), he no longer had these two women to fear, whose disclosures and attacks might have been most disastrous to him.

The disposition, habits, and former life of Jacques Ferrand known and displayed, the exciting beauty of the Creole admitted, as we have endeavoured to paint her, together with other facts we shall detail as we proceed, will account, we presume, for the sudden passion, the unbridled desire of the notary for this seductive and dangerous creature. Then we must add, that if women of Cecily's stamp inspire nothing but repugnance and disgust to men endued with tender and elevated sentiments, with delicate and pure tastes, they exercise a sudden action, a magic omnipotence, over men of brutal sensuality like Jacques Ferrand. Thus a just, an avenging fatality, brought the Creole into contact with the notary, and a terrible expiation was beginning for him. A fierce passion had urged him on to persecute, with pitiless malice, an indigent and honest family, and to spread amongst them misery, madness, and death. This passion was now to be the formidable chastisement of this great culprit.

Although Jacques Ferrand was never to have his desires realised, the Creole took care not to deprive him of all hope; but the vague and distant prospects she held out were so coloured by caprices, that they were an additional torture, and more completely enslaved him.

If we are astonished that a man of such vigour and audacity had not recourse to stratagem or violence to triumph over the calculating resistance of Cecily, we forget that Cecily was not a second Louise. Besides, the day after her presentation to the notary, she had played quite another part from that, by aid of which she had been introduced to *her master*, for he had not been the dupe of his *servant* two days.

Forewarned of the fate of Louise by the Baron de Graün, and knowing beside by what abominable means she had become the prey of the notary, the Creole, on entering this solitary house, had taken excellent precautions for passing her first night there in perfect security. The evening of her arrival, being alone with Jacques Ferrand, he in order not to alarm her, pretended scarcely to look at her, and rudely ordered her to bed. She told him, *naïvely*, that she was afraid of thieves in the night, but that she was resolute, and capable of defending herself; at the same time drawing from her large woollen pelisse a small, but exceedingly keen stiletto, the sight of which set the notary thinking.

Believing that Cecily was afraid of *robbers* only, he shewed her to the late chamber of Louise; after having examined it, Cecily said, trembling, she would sleep in a chair, because the door had neither lock nor bolt. Jacques Ferrand, unwilling to compromise himself by rousing Cecily's suspicions, promised a bolt should be fixed. The Creole did not go to bed.

In the morning the notary sent to her to shew her how to set about her work. He had promised himself to preserve for the first few days a hypocritical reserve with respect to his new servant, in order to inspire her with confidence; but smitten by her beauty, which by daylight was even more striking, blinded, maddened by his desires, which already got the better of him, he stammered out some compliments as to the figure and beauty of Cecily. She, with keen sagacity, had judged that, from her first interview with the notary, he was completely caught in her spells: at the confession he made of his *flame*, she thought it policy to cast aside at once her feigned timidity, and, as we have said, to change her mask. The Creole suddenly assumed a bold air. Jacques Ferrand again complimented her beauty and her graceful figure.

"Look at me well!" said Cecily to him, in a bold tone. "Although I am dressed as an Alsatian peasant, do I look like a servant?"

"What do you mean?" cried Jacques Ferrand.

"Look at this hand, does it appear accustomed to hard labour?" and she presented a white, delicate hand, with long and slender fingers, with nails as rosy and polished as agate, but whose root, slightly browned, betrayed the Creole blood. "And this foot, is it that of a servant?" and she protruded a beautiful small foot, coquettishly shod, which the notary had not before remarked, and from which he only removed his eyes to gaze on Cecily with amazement. "I told my aunt Pipelet what story I chose; she knew nothing of my former life, and believes me reduced to my present condition through the death of my parents, and takes me for a servant,—but you, I hope, have too much sagacity to shew her error, *dear master*."

"Who, then, are you?" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, more and more surprised at her language.

"That is my secret. For reasons best known to myself I was obliged to quit Germany in this attire. I wished to remain concealed in Paris for some time, being as secluded as possible. My aunt, supposing me reduced to misery, proposed to me your service, telling me of the solitary life which I must of compulsion lead in your house, informing me that I should never have leave to quit it. I accepted the offer unhesitatingly,—without knowing it my aunt had anticipated my most earnest desire. Who would think of looking for and finding me here?"

"And what have you done to compel you to seek concealment?"

"Agreeable sins, perhaps; but that is, also, my secret."

"And what are your intentions, mademoiselle?"

"What they always have been. But for your significant compliments as to my shape and beauty, perhaps I should not have confessed so much to you; although, no doubt, your clearsightedness would, sooner or later, have induced my confession. Now listen to me, my dear master. I have for the moment accepted the condition,—or, rather, the character,—of a servant: circumstances compelled me. I have courage enough to

sustain the character to the end, and will risk all the consequences. I will serve you with zeal, activity, and respect, in order to retain my situation, that is to say, a sure and unknown asylum. But on the least word of gallantry, the least liberty you take with me, I will leave you,—not from prudery, there is nothing of the prude about me, I fancy." And she darted a look at the notary, which had full effect. "No, I am no prude!" she continued, with a provoking smile, which displayed her teeth of dazzling whiteness. "Indeed no, when I love, I do love! But be discreet, and you will see that your unworthy servant has no desire but honestly to discharge her duty as a servant. Now you have my secret, or, at least, a portion of it. But should you, by any chance, desire to act as a gentleman—should you find me too handsome to serve you—should you like to change parts, and become my slave—be it so! frankly speaking, I should prefer it, and had rather you should feel paternally disposed towards me. That would not prevent you from saying that you found me charming; this will be the recompense of your devotion and discretion."

"The only one? the only one?" stammered Jacques Ferrand.

"The only one, unless solitude make me mad—which is impossible, for you will keep me company. Come, make up your mind—no ambiguity. I either serve you, or you shall serve me; if not, I leave your house, and beg my aunt to find me *another place*. All this may, perhaps, appear strange to you; but if you take me for an adventuress, without any means of existence, you are wrong. In order that my aunt should be my accomplice without knowing it, I have made her believe that I was so poor that I could not purchase any other garments than those I now wear. I have, however, as you see, a tolerably well-filled purse; on this

side gold, on the other diamonds" (and Cecily displayed before the notary's eyes a long, red, silk purse, filled with gold, and through the meshes of which he could also see several sparkling gems). "Unfortunately all the money in the world could not purchase for me a retreat so secure as your house,—so isolated, from the very solitude in which you live. Accept, then, one or other of my offers, and you will do me a kindness. You see I place myself almost at your discretion; for to say to you, I conceal myself, is to say to you I am sought for. But I am sure you will not betray me, even if you could."

This romantic confidence, this sudden change of character, completely upset all Jacques Ferrand's ideas. Who was this woman? Why did she conceal herself? Was it chance alone that had brought her to him? If she came with some secret aim, what could it be? Amongst all the ideas which this singular adventure gave rise to in the notary's mind, the real motive of the Creole's presence did not occur to him. He had not, or, rather, he believed he had no other enemies than the victims of his licentiousness and his cupidity, and all these were in such miserable circumstances that he could not suspect them capable of spreading any net for him, of which Cecily should be the bait. And then, moreover, what could be the motive of any such snare? No, the sudden transformation of Cecily inspired Jacques Ferrand with one fear only—he believed that this woman did not tell the truth, and was, perhaps, an adventuress, who, thinking him rich, had introduced herself into his house to wheedle and get money from him, and, perhaps, induce him to marry her. But although his avarice at once revolted at this idea, he perceived (and trembled) that his suspicions and reflections were too late, for he might by one word have calmed his distrust by sending away this woman from his house—but this word he could not say. These thoughts hardly occupied him a moment, so fascinated had he become. He already loved, after his own fashion, and the idea of being separated from this enchanting creature seemed impossible; and he felt also a jealousy, which made him say to himself, So long as she is immured in my house, she can have no other lover. The boldness of her language, the wantonness of her look, the freedom of her manner, all revealed that she was not (as she had said) a *prude*. This conviction, giving vague hopes to the notary, still more assured Cecily's empire. In a word, Jacques Ferrand's passion choking the calm voice of reason, he blindly resigned himself to all that might result.

* * * * * *

It was agreed that Cecily should only be the servant in appearance: thus there would be no scandal. Besides, in order the more completely to render his *guest* at her ease, he was not to engage any other servant, but make up his mind to wait on her and on himself. The meals were brought from a neighbouring tavern, the porter swept out and attended to the office, and he paid for his clerks' breakfast. Then the notary would furnish at once an apartment on the first floor, as Cecily wished. She desired to pay for it, but he refused, and spent *two thousand francs* (80*l*.). This was enormous generosity, and proved the unheard-of violence of his passion. Then began the terrible life of this miserable wretch. Inclosed in the impenetrable solitude of this house, inaccessible to all,

more and more under the galling yoke of his mad love, careless of penetrating the secret of this singular woman; from a master he was made a slave—he was Cecily's valet, served her at meal times, and took

care of her apartment. Forewarned by the baron that Louise had been overcome by a narcotic, the Creole drank only pure water, eating only of dishes with which it was impossible to tamper. She had selected the apartment she was to occupy, assuring herself that there was there no concealed entrance. Besides, Jacques Ferrand soon discovered that Cecily was not a woman whom he could assail with impunity; she was vigorous, agile, and dangerously armed: thus a frenzied delirium alone could have incited him to attempt force, and she was quite protected from this peril.

Yet, that she might not weary and utterly repulse the notary's passion, the Creole seemed sometimes touched by his assiduities, and flattered by the control which she exercised over him. And, perceiving that he hoped, by dint of proofs of devotion and self-denial, he should contrive to make her overlook his age and ugliness, she amused herself with telling him that if she ever could love him, how excessive that love would be. With this Jacques Ferrand's reason wandered, and he would frequently walk in his garden at night absorbed in his own reflections. Sometimes he gazed for hours into the bedroom of the Creole; for she had allowed a small window to be made in the door, which she frequently and intentionally left open. Absorbed, lost, wandering, indifferent to his most important interests, or the preservation of his reputation as an austere, serious, and pious man—a reputation usurped, it is true, but, at the same time, acquired after long years of dissimulation and chicanery,—he amazed his clerks by his aberration of mind, offended his clients by his refusals to receive them, and abruptly refused the visits of the priests, who, deceived by his hypocrisy, had been until then his warmest champions.

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We have said that Cecily was dressing her head before her glass. At

a slight noise in the corridor she turned her head towards the door. In spite of the noise she had heard, Cecily continued her night toilette tranquilly. She drew from her *corsaye*, where it was placed almost like a busk, a stiletto five or six inches long, enclosed in a case of black shagreen, having a small ebony handle, with silver threads—a plain handle, but very *fit for use:* it was not a mere weapon for *show*. Cecily took the dagger from its scabbard with excessive precaution, and laid it on the marble mantelpiece. The blade, of finest temper and Damascus steel, was triangular, with keen edges; and the point, as sharp as a needle, would have pierced a shilling without turning the edge. Impregnated with a subtle and rapid poison, the slightest puncture of this poniard was mortal. Jacques Ferrand having one day alluded to the danger of this weapon, the Creole made in his presence an experiment, *in animâ vita*—that is to say, on the unfortunate house-dog, which, slightly pricked on the nose, fell and died in horrible convulsions. The stiletto placed on the

mantelpiece, Cecily took off her black boddice, and was then with her shoulders, neck, and arms denuded, like a lady in her ball-dress. Like most of the Creole women, she wore, instead of stays, another boddice of stout linen, which fitted her figure very closely; her orange-coloured petticoat, remaining attached to this sort of white spencer, with short sleeves, and cut very low, formed a costume less precise than the other, and harmonised wonderfully with the scarlet stocking, and the coloured handkerchief, so coquettishly arranged around the Creole's head. Nothing could be more perfect, more beautifully defined, than the graceful contour of her arms and shoulders. A heavy sigh aroused Cecily's attention. She smiled, as she twisted round her finger one of her curling tresses, which had escaped from beneath her head-dress.

"Cecily! Cecily!" murmured a voice, which was plaintive though coarse. And through the wicket was visible the pale and flat face of Jacques Ferrand.

Cecily, silent until then, began to hum a Creole air: the words of this melody were sweet and expressive. Although repressed, the full *contra-alto* of Cecily was heard above the noise of the torrents of rain and gusts of wind, which seemed to shake the old house to its very foundation.

"Cecily! Cecily!" repeated Jacques Ferrand, in a tone of supplication.

The Creole paused suddenly and turned her head round quickly, as if, for the first time, she then heard the notary's voice; and going towards the door,—

"What! dear master (she called him so in derision), you there?" she said, with a slight foreign accent, which gave additional charm to her full and sarcastic voice.

"Oh, how beautiful you are!" murmured the notary.

"You think so?" said Cecily: "doesn't my head-dress become me?"

"I think you handsomer every day."

"Only see how white my arm is."

"Monster, begone! begone!" shouted Jacques Ferrand, furious.

Cecily burst into a loud fit of laughter.

"No, no, it is too much to suffer! Oh, if I were not afraid of death!" said the notary, gloomily; "but to die is to renounce you altogether, and you are so beautiful! I would rather, then, suffer—and look at you."

"Look at me? why, that's what the wicket was made for; and so we can thus chat, like two friends, in our solitude, which really is not irksome to me, you are such a *good master!* What a dangerous confession I make through the door!"

"Will you never open this door? You see how submissive I am: this evening I might have tried to enter into your chamber with you, but I did not do so."

"You are submissive for two reasons: in the first place, because you know that, having, from the necessity of my wandering life, always had the precaution to carry a stiletto, I can manage with a strong hand this inestimable jewel, whose tooth is sharper than a viper's; and you know, too, that, from the day in which I have to complain of you, I will quit this roof for ever, leaving you a thousand times more enamoured than ever—since you have so greatly honoured your unworthy servant as to say that you are enamoured of her."

"My servant? it is I who am your slave—your mocked, derided, despised slave!"

"That's true enough."

"And yet it does not move you?"

"It amuses me: the days, and especially the nights, are so long!"

"Accursed creature!"

"But, seriously, you look so perfectly wretched, your features have so sensibly altered, that I am quite flattered at it. It is a poor triumph, but you are the only one here."

"To hear that, and me consume in impotent rage!"

"Have you really any understanding? why, I never said any thing more tender."

"Jeer at me—jeer at me!"

"I do not jeer. I never before saw a man of your age in love after your fashion; and, I must confess, a young and handsome man would be incapable of these outrageous passions. An Adonis admires himself as much as he admires us: he likes us, and we choose to notice him—nothing more simple. He has a claim to our love, but is hardly grateful; but to shew favour to a man like you, my master dear, would be to take him from earth to heaven, to fulfil his wildest dreams, his most insensate hopes. For if some being were to say to you, you love Cecily to distraction, if I chose she should be yours next minute; you would suppose such a being endued with supernatural power, shouldn't you, master dear?"

"Yes!—ah, yes!"

"Well, if you could convince me more satisfactorily of your passion, I might, perchance, have the whimsical fancy to enact this supernatural part myself in your favour. Do you comprehend?"

"I comprehend that you are still fooling me,—that you are still pitiless."

"Perhaps,—for solitude creates so many singular fancies."

Until this moment Cécily's accent had been sarcastic, but she pronounced these last words with a serious, reflecting tone, and accompanied them with a look which made the notary start.

"Silence! do not look at me thus—you will drive me mad! I would rather you denied me,—at least, I could then hate you—drive you from my house!" cried Jacques Ferrand, who again gave himself up to a vain hope. "Yes, for I should then hope nothing from you. But, misery! misery! I know you well enough now to hope, in spite of myself, that one day I might, from your very hate or proud caprice, obtain what I shall never owe to your love. You bid me convince you of my passion—do you not see how unhappy I am? I will do all I can to please you. You desire to be concealed from all eyes, and from all eyes I conceal you, perchance at the risk of compromising myself most seriously; for, indeed, I know not who you are. I respect your secret—I never speak to you of it. I have interrogated you as to your past life, and you have given me no answer."

"Well, then, I was very wrong. I'll give you a mark of blind confidence, oh, master, dear! And so, listen."

"Another bitter jest, no doubt."

"No, a serious tale. You ought, at least, to know the life of her to whom you afford such generous hospitality." Then Cécily continued, in a tone of hypocritical and lachrymose earnestness, "Daughter of a brave soldier, brother of my aunt Pipelet, I received an education beyond my condition. I was seduced, and then abandoned, by a rich young gentleman; then to escape the anger of my father, whose notions of honour were most strict, I fled my native country." Then bursting into a loud fit of laughter, Cécily added, "Now I hope that's what you call a very pretty and particularly probable tale, for it has been very often told. Amuse your curiosity with that until you get hold of some other story more interesting."

"I was certain it was some cruel jest," said the notary, with concentrated rage; "nothing touches you—nothing. What must I do? tell me. I serve you like the lowest footboy, for you I neglect my dearest interests,—I no longer know what I do. I am a subject of astonishment and derision to my own clerks; my clients hesitate any longer to intrust me with their affairs; I have severed my connexion with some religious persons whom I knew intimately. I dare not think of what the world will say of my change of demeanour and habits. But you do not know—no, you do not know the fatal consequences my mad passion for you may entail on me. Yet I give you ample proof of my devotion. Will you have more? speak! Is it gold you would have? They think me richer than I am, but I——"

"What could I do with your gold?" asked Cécily, interrupting the notary, and shrugging her shoulders; "living in this chamber, what is the use of gold?—your invention is at fault."

"It is no fault of mine if you are a prisoner. Is this chamber displeasing to you? Will you have one more splendid? Speak! order!"

"Once more, what is the use?—what is the use? Oh, if I might here expect a beloved one, full of the love he inspires and participates, I would

have gold, silks, flowers, perfumes, all the wonders of luxury; nothing could be too sumptuous—too enchanting to enshrine my love," said Cécily, with an impassioned voice.

"Well, these wonders of luxury, say but a word, and——"

"What's the use?—what's the use? Why make a frame for which there is no picture? And the adored one! where is he—where is he—master, dear?"

"True," exclaimed the notary, with bitterness, "I am old—I am ugly—I can only inspire disgust and aversion. She overwhelms me with contempt—jests at me—and yet I have not the resolution, the power to send her away. I have only the resolution to suffer!"

"Oh, silly old mourner! and what an absurd elderly gentleman, with his sufferings!" cried Cécily, in a contemptuous and sarcastic tone; "he only knows how to groan, to despair,—and yet he has been for ten days shut up alone with a young woman in a lone house."

"But this woman scorns me—this woman is armed—this woman is shut up!" groaned the notary, furiously.

"Well, conquer her scorn—make the dagger fall from her hands—compel her to open the door which separates her from yourself!—but not by brute force, that would be useless."

"How then?"

"By the strength of your passion."

"Passion! and can I inspire it?"

"Why, you are nothing but a lawyer affecting piety—I really pity you. Is it for me to teach you your part? You are ugly—be terrible, and one may forget your ugliness. You are old—be energetic, and one may forget your age. You are repulsive—become menacing. Since you cannot be the noble steed that neighs proudly in the midst of his harem, do not become the stupid camel that bends the knee and offers his back; be the tiger! The old tiger, that roars in the midst of carnage, still excites admiration; his tigress responds to him from the deepest recesses of the desert."

At this language, which was not deficient in a sort of natural and hardy eloquence, Jacques Ferrand shuddered; struck by the expression, wild and almost fierce, which Cécily's features displayed, as, with her bosom palpitating, her nostrils open, her mouth defying, she fastened on him her large and brilliant black eyes. Never had she seemed to him more fascinating, or more resplendently beautiful than at this moment.

"Speak—speak again!" he exclaimed, with excitement; "for now you speak in earnest. Oh! if I could——"

"One can do what one wishes," replied Cécily, sternly.

"But——"

"But I tell you, old as you are, if I were in your place I would undertake to engage the affections of a young and handsome woman, and once having achieved this result, what had been against me would turn to my advantage. What pride, what triumph to say to oneself, I have made my age and ugliness forgotten! the love that is shewn me I do not owe to pity, but to my spirit, my courage, and my skill. Yes, and now if there were here some handsome young fellows, brilliant with grace and attractions, the lovely woman, whom I have subdued, by proofs of a resistless and unbounded devotion, would not deign to cast a look at them. No, for she would know that these elegant effeminates would fear to compromise the tie of their cravat, or a curl of their hair, in obedience to her caprices; whilst if she cast her handkerchief in the midst of flames, on a signal from her, her old tiger would rush into the furnace with a roar of ecstasy."

"Yes, I would do it! Try! try!" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, more and more excited.

Cécily continued drawing nearer to the aperture, and fixing on Jacques Ferrand a steadfast and penetrating look.

"For this woman would well know," continued the Creole, "that she would have some exorbitant caprice to satisfy,—that these dandies would look at their money, if they had any, or if they had not, at some other low consideration, whilst her old tiger——"

"Would consider nothing—nothing, I tell you. Fortune—honour—he—he—would sacrifice all!"

"Really?" said Cécily, putting her lovely fingers on the bony fingers of Jacques Ferrand, whose clutched hands, passed through the small glass

door, were clasping the top of the ledge. "Would not this woman be ardently loved?" added Cécily, "if she had an enemy, and, with a gesture, pointed him out to her old tiger, and said to him, Strike——"

"And he would strike!" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, attempting to press Cécily's fingers with his parched lips.

"Really, the old tiger would strike?" said the Creole, placing her hand gently on the hand of Jacques Ferrand.

"To possess you," cried the wretch, "I could commit a crime——"

"Ah, master," said Cécily, suddenly, and withdrawing her hand, "go—go—in my turn I scarcely know you—you do not seem to me so ugly as you did just now. But go—go!" and she left the aperture abruptly.

The artful creature gave to her gestures and these last words an appearance of truth so perfect, and a look of such surprise, as if angry and disappointed with herself for having for an instant only appeared to forget the ugliness of Jacques Ferrand, that he, transported by frenzied hope, cried, as he clung convulsively to the ledge of the aperture,—

"Cécily, come back—come back! Bid me do what you will, I will be your tiger."

"No, no, master!" said Cécily, still retreating; "and in order to forget you, I will sing a song of my country."

"Cécily, return!" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, in a supplicating tone.

"No, no! later, when I can without danger. But the light of this lamp hurts my eyes—a soft languor overcomes my senses!" and Cécily extinguished the lamp, took down a guitar, and made up the fire, whose increased blaze then lighted up the whole apartment.

From the narrow window, where he stood motionless, such was the picture that Jacques Ferrand perceived. In the midst of the luminous circle formed by the flickering blaze of the fire, Cécily, in a position full of softness and *abandonnement*, half reclining on a large sofa of garnet-damask, held a guitar, on which she ran over several harmonious preludes. The fire-light threw its red tints on the Creole, who appeared thus

in strong relief. To complete the tableau, the reader must call to mind the mysterious and singular appearance of a room in which the fire from the grate struggles with the deep and large black shadows, which tremble on the ceiling and the walls. The storm without increased, and roared loudly.

Whilst she preludised on her guitar, Cécily fixed her eyes immovably on Jacques Ferrand, who, fascinated, could not take his look from her.

"Now, master mine," said the Creole, "listen to a song of my country. We do not understand how to make verses, but have a simple recitative, without rhyme, and between each rest we improvise, as well as we can, a symphony appropriate to the idea of the couplet; it is very simple and pastoral, and I am sure, master, it will please you."

And Cécily began a kind of recitative, much more accentuated by the expression of the voice than the modulation of the music. Some soft and vibrating chords served as accompaniment. This was Cécily's song:—

"Flowers—still flowers, every where.
My lover is coming—my hope of happiness unnerves me.
Let us subdue the glare of daylight, pleasure seeks the softer shade.
My lover prefers my breath to the perfume of the sweetest flowers.
The brightness of day will not affect his eyelids, for my kisses will keep them closed.
Come—come—come—come love! come—come—come!"

These words, uttered with animation, as if the Creole was addressing an unseen lover, were rendered by her the theme of a delicious melody; her charming fingers produced from the guitar, an instrument of no great power, vibrations full of harmony. The impassioned look of Cécily, her half-closed, humid eyes fastened on Jacques Ferrand, were full of the expression of expectation. Words of love, delicious music, together conspired at the moment to bereave Jacques Ferrand of his reason; and, half frenzied, he exclaimed,—

"Mercy, Cécily, mercy! you will drive me distracted! Oh, be silent, or I die!—Oh, that I were mad!"

"Listen to the second couplet, master," said the Creole, again touching the chords; and she thus continued her impassioned recitative,—

"If my lover were here, and his hand touched my bare shoulder, I should tremble and die.
If he were here, and his curly hair touched my cheek, my pale cheek would become purple—my pale cheek would be on fire.
Soul of my Soul, if thou wert here, my parched lips would not utter a word.
Life of my Life, if thou wert here, I should expiring ask thy pardon.
'Tis sweet to die for and with those we love.
Angel, come—come to my heart—come—come—come!"

If the Creole had rendered the first strophe with languid pleasure, she put in her last words all the enthusiasm of antique love; and as if the music had been powerless to express her intense passion, she threw her guitar from her, and, half rising and extending her arms towards the door, where Jacques Ferrand stood, she repeated, in a faltering, dying

tone, *Oh! come—come—come!*" It would be impossible to depict the electric look with which she accompanied these words. Jacques Ferrand uttered a terrible cry.

"Oh, death! death to him whom you could thus love!" he cried, shaking the door in a burst of jealousy and furious rage.

Agile as a panther, Cécily was at the door with one bound: and, as if she with difficulty repressed her feigned transports, she said to Jacques Ferrand, in a low, concentrated, palpitating voice,—

"Well, then, I will confess I am excited by my song. I did not mean to approach the door again, yet here I am, in spite of myself; for I hear still the words you said just now, '*If you bade me strike, I would strike.*' You love me, then?"

"Will you have gold—all my gold?"

"No, I have enough."

"Have you an enemy? I will kill him."

"I have no enemy."

"Will you be my wife? I'll marry you."

"I am married."

"What would you, then? oh, what would you?"

"Prove to me that your passion for me is blind—furious! and that you would sacrifice all to it."

"Ah!—yes—all. But how?"

"I do not know—but a moment since your eyes fascinated me. If again you give me one of those marks of intense love, which excite the imagination of a woman to madness, I know not of what I should not be capable. Make haste, then, for I am capricious, and to-morrow, perhaps, all the impression will be effaced."

"But what proof can I give you at this moment?" cried the notary.

"You are but a fool, after all!" replied Cécily, retreating from the aperture with an air of disdain. "I was deceived—I believed you capable of energetic devotion. Good night!—it's a pity!"

"Cécily, do not leave me!—return! What can I do?"

"I was but too much disposed to listen to you; you will never have such another opportunity."

"But oh, tell me what you would have!" cried the notary, half mad.

"Eh! if you were as passionately in love as you say, you would find means to persuade me. Good night!"

"Cécily!"

"I will shut the door, instead of opening it."

"Cécily—listen! I will give you yet another proof of my devotion."

"What is this proof of your love?" said the Creole, who having approached the mantelpiece to resume her dagger, returned slowly towards the door, lighted by the flame of the hearth. Then, unobserved by the notary, she made sure of the action of an iron chain, which terminated in two small knobs, one of which was screwed into the door, and the other into the door-post.

"Listen!" said Jacques Ferrand, in a hoarse and broken voice—"listen! If I place my honour, my fortune, my life at your mercy—now, this very instant—will you then believe I love you?"

"Your honour, your fortune, your life! I do not comprehend you."

"If I confide to you a secret which may bring me to the scaffold, will you then believe me?"

"You a criminal? you do but jest. What, then, is your austere life—your piety—your honesty?"

"All—all a lie!"

"You pass for a saint, and yet you boast of these iniquities! No, there is no man so craftily skilful, so fortunately bold, as thus to captivate the confidence and respect of men; that were, indeed, a fearful defiance cast in the teeth of society!"

"I am that man—I have cast that sarcasm, that defiance in the face of society!" exclaimed the monster, in a tone of ecstatic pride.

"Jacques! Jacques! do not speak thus!" said Cécily, with a tone of emotion; "you make me mad!"

"My head for your love—will you have it so?"

"Ah, this, indeed, is love! Here, take my poniard—you disarm me!"

Jacques Ferrand took, through the wicket, the dangerous weapon, with due precaution, and flung it from him to a distance in the corridor.

"Cécily, you believe me, then!" he exclaimed with transport.

"Do I believe you?" said the Creole, energetically pressing her beautiful fingers on the clasped hands of Jacques Ferrand. "Oh, yes, I do! for now, again, you look as you did a short time since, when my very soul seemed fascinated by your gaze."

"Cécily, you will speak the words of truth—and truth only—to me?"

"And can you doubt it for a moment? ah, you will soon have ample proof of my sincerity. But what you are about to tell me is quite true—is it not?"

"I repeat that you may believe each word I utter."

"So much the better, since you are enabled to prove your passion by the avowal of them."

"And if I tell you all?"

"Then will I, in return, withhold nothing from you; for if, indeed, you have this blind, this courageous confidence in me, Jacques, I will call no more for the ideal lover of my song, but you—my hero, my tiger! to whom I will sing, 'Come—come—oh, come!'"

As Cécily uttered these words, with an air and voice of seductive tenderness, she drew so close to the wicket that Jacques Ferrand could feel the hot breath of the Creole pass over his cheek, while her fresh, full lip lightly touched his coarse, vulgar hand. "Call me your tiger—your slave—what you will—and if after that you but divulge what I intrust to you, my life will be the consequence. Yes, enchantress, a word from you, and I perish on a scaffold. My honour, reputation—nay, my very existence—are henceforward in your hands."

"Your honour?"

"Yes, even so. But listen. About ten years ago I was intrusted with the care of a child, and a sum of money for her use, amounting to 200,000 francs; well, I wronged the little creature, by spreading a false report of her death, and then appropriated the money to my own purposes."

"It was boldly and cleverly done! Who would ever have believed you capable of such conduct?"

"Again. I had a cashier, whom I detested, and I determined upon ruining him one way or other. Well, one evening, under some great emergency, he took from my cash box a trifling amount of gold, which he paid back the next day; but to wreak my malice on the object of my dislike, I accused him of having stolen a large sum. Of course my testimony was believed, and the wretched man was thrown into prison. Now is not my honour—my very safety—at your will and pleasure? At your word both would be in peril."

"Then you love me, Jacques—oh! truly, blindly love me! since you thus surrender to me the most precious secrets of your heart; how plainly does it prove the empire I must have over you! Ah! believe me, I will not be niggardly in repaying you. Stoop that brow, from which have emanated so many infernal schemes, that I may press it with my lips."

"Were the scaffold erected for me," cried the excited notary—"did death stare me in the face, I would not now recall my words. But

hearken to what I have still to confess. The child I formerly wronged and forsook has again crossed my path, her reappearance disquieted me, and I have had her murdered."

"Murdered! and by your orders? But how—in what manner?"

"A few days since: it occurred thus. Near the bridge of Asnières, at the Isle du Ravageurs, a man named Martial, for a bribe, contrived to sink her in a boat, made purposely with a false bottom. Are these particulars sufficient? Will you believe me now?"

"Oh, fiend! demon! you terrify while you fascinate me! In what consists your marvellous power and influence?"

"But listen further, for I have not yet finished my catalogue of crimes. Previously to that a man had intrusted me with 100,000 crowns. I contrived to waylay and blow out his brains, making it appear he had fallen by his own hand. Afterwards, when his sister claimed the money intrusted to my charge, I denied all knowledge of it. Now, then, I have proclaimed myself a malefactor, guilty of every crime. Will you not open your door, and admit a lover so ardent, so impatient as myself?"

"Jacques," exclaimed the Creole, with much excitement, "I admire—love—nay, adore you!"

"Let a thousand deaths come!" cried the notary, in a state of enthusiastic delight impossible to describe, "I will brave them all! Oh, you are right! were I ever so young, so handsome, or so seducing, I could not hope for joy such as now swells my heart. But delay not, charmer of my soul—give me the key, or yourself undo the bolts which separate us. I can endure this torturing suspense no longer!"

The Creole took from the lock, which she had carefully secured beforehand, the key so ardently prayed for, and handing it to the notary through the aperture said, in a languishing tone of utter *abandonnement*,—

"Jacques, my senses seem forsaking me—my brain is on fire—I know not what I do or say."

"You are mine, then, at length, my adorable beauty!" cried he, with a wild shout of savage exultation, and hastily turning the key in the lock. But the firmly-bolted door yielded not yet.

"Come, beloved of my heart!" murmured Cécily, in a languid voice; "bless me with your presence—come!"

"The bolt! the bolt!" gasped out Jacques Ferrand, breathless with his exertions to force open the door.

"But what if you have been deceiving me?" cried the Creole, as though a sudden thought had seized her; "if you have only invented the secrets with which you affect to intrust me, to mock at my credulity—to ensnare my confidence?"

The notary appeared thunderstruck with surprise at this fresh expression of doubt, at the very moment when he believed himself upon the point of attaining his wishes, to find a new obstacle arise when he considered success certain, drove him almost furious. He rapidly thrust his hand into his breast, opened his waistcoat, impatiently snapped a steel chain, to which was suspended a small red morocco pocket-book, took it, and shewing it to Cécily, through the aperture, cried, in a thick, palpitating voice,—

"This book contains papers that would bring me to a scaffold, only

undo the bolts which deny me entrance to your presence, and this book, with all its precious documents, is yours."

"Oh, then let us seal the compact!" exclaimed Cécily, as drawing back the bolt with as much noise as possible with one hand, with the other she seized the pocket-book.

But Jacques Ferrand permitted it not to leave his possession till he felt the door yield to his pressure. But though it partially gave way, it was but to leave an opening about half a foot wide—the solid chain which passed across it above the lock preventing any person's entering as completely as before. At this unexpected obstacle Jacques Ferrand precipitated himself against the door and shook it with desperate fury, while Cécily, with the rapidity of thought, took the pocket-book between her teeth, opened the window, threw a large cloak out into the yard below, and, light and agile as bold and daring, seized a knotted cord previously secured to the balcony, and glided from her chamber on the first floor to

the court beneath—descending with the swiftness of an arrow shot from a bow. Then wrapping herself hastily in the mantle, she flew to the porter's lodge, opened the door, drew up the string, ran into the street, and sprang into a hackney-coach, which, ever since Cécily had been with Jacques Ferrand, came regularly every evening, in case of need, by Baron Graün's orders, and took up its station a short distance from the notary's house. Directly she had entered the vehicle it drove off at the topmost speed of the two strong, powerful horses that drew it, and had reached the Boulevards ere Jacques Ferrand had even discovered Cécily's flight.

We will now return to the disappointed wretch. From the situation of the door he was unable to perceive the window by which the Creole had contrived to prepare and make good her flight; but concentrating all his powers, by a vigorous application of his brawny shoulders, Jacques Ferrand succeeded in forcing out the chain which kept the door from opening. With furious impatience he rushed into the chamber—it was empty. The knotted cord was still suspended to the balcony of the window from which he leaned; and then, at the other extremity of the court-yard, he saw by means of the moon, which just then shone out from behind the stormy clouds which had hitherto obscured it, the dim outline of the outer gate swinging to and fro as though left open by some person having hastily passed through. Then did Jacques Ferrand divine the whole of the scheme so successfully laid to entrap him; but a glimmer of hope still remained. Determined and vigorous, he threw his leg over the balcony, let himself down in his turn by the cord, and hastily quitted the house.

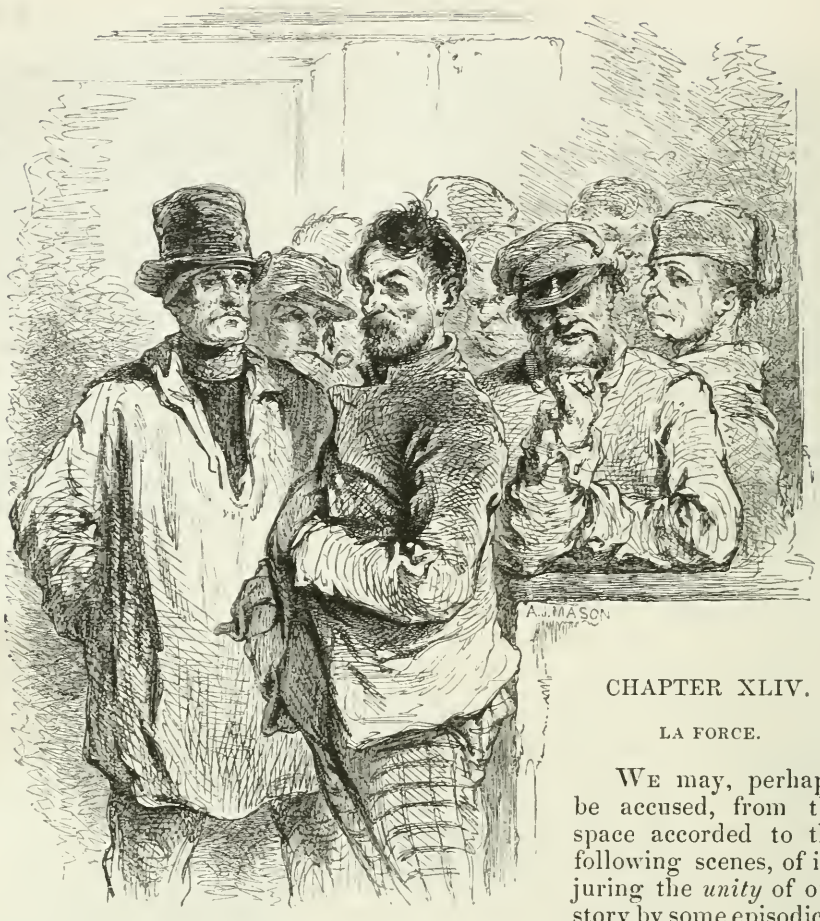
The street was quite deserted—not a creature was to be seen; and the only sound his ear could detect was the distant rumbling of the wheels of the vehicle that bore away the object of his search. The notary, who supposed it to be the carriage of some person whose business or pleasure took them late from home, paid no attention to this circumstance.

There was then no chance of finding Cécily, whose absence was the more disastrous, as she carried with her the positive proof of his crimes. As this fearful certainty came over him, he fell, struck with consternation, on a bench placed against his door, where he long remained, mute, motionless, and as though petrified with horror. His eyes fixed and haggard, his teeth clenched, and his lips covered with foam, tearing his breast, as though unconsciously, till the blood streamed from it, he felt his very brain dizzy with thought, till his ideas were lost in a fathomless abyss. When he recovered from his stupor he arose and staggered onwards with an unsteady and faltering step, like a person just aroused from a state of complete intoxication. He violently shut the entrance-door and returned to the courtyard. The rain had by this time ceased, but the wind still continued strong and gusty, and drove rapidly along the heavy grey clouds which veiled without entirely excluding the brightness of the moon, whose pale and sickly light shone on the house.

Somewhat calmed by the clear freshness of the night air, Jacques Ferrand, as though hoping to find relief from his internal agitation by the rapidity of his movements, plunged into the muddy paths of his garden, walking with quick, hurried steps, and from time to time pressing his clenched hands against his forehead. Heedless of the direction he proceeded in, he at length reached the termination of a walk, adjoining to

which was a dilapidated greenhouse. Suddenly he stumbled heavily against a mass of newly disturbed earth. Mechanically he stooped down to examine the nature of the impediment which presented itself; the deep hole which had been dug, and morsels of torn garments lying by, told him with awful certainty that he stood by the grave dug by poor Louise Morel to receive the remains of her dead infant—*her* infant, which was also the child of the heartless, hardened wretch who now stood trembling and conscience-stricken beside this fearful memento of his sensuality and brutal persecution of a poor and helpless girl. And spite of his hardihood, his long course of sin and seared conscience, a deadly tremor shook his frame, he felt an instinctive persuasion that the hour of deep retribution was at hand.

Under other circumstances Jacques Ferrand would have trampled the humble grave beneath his feet without remorse or concern, but now, exhausted by the preceding scene, he felt his usual boldness forsake him, while fear and trembling came upon him. A cold sweat bedewed his brow, his tottering knees refused to support him, and he fell motionless beside the open grave.



CHAPTER XLIV.

LA FORCE.

We may, perhaps, be accused, from the space accorded to the following scenes, of injuring the *unity* of our story by some episodical pictures; but it seems to us that, at this moment particularly, when important questions of punishment are engaging the attention of the legislature, that the interior of a prison—that frightful pandemonium, that gloomy *thermometer* of *civilisation*—will be an opportune study. In a word, the various physiognomies of prisoners of all classes, the relations of kin or affection, which still bind them to the world from which their gaol walls separate them, appear to us worthy of interest and attention. We hope, therefore, to be excused for having grouped about many prisoners known to the readers of this history, other secondary characters, intended to put in relief certain ideas of criticism, and to complete the initiation of a *prison life*.

* * * * * *

Let us enter La Force. There is nothing sombre or repulsive in the aspect of this house of incarceration in the Rue du Roi de Sicile, in the Marais. In the centre of one of the first courts there are some clumps of trees, thickened with shrubs, at the roots of which there are already, here and there, the green, precocious shoots of primroses and snowdrops. A raised ascent, surmounted by a porch covered with trellis-work, in

which knotty stalks of the vine entwine, leads to one of the seven or eight walks assigned to the prisoners. The vast buildings which surround these courts very much resemble those of a barrack or manufactory kept with exceeding care. There are lofty *façades* of white stone, pierced with high and large windows, which admit of the free circulation of pure air. The stones and pavement of the enclosures are kept excessively clean. On the ground-floor, the large apartments, warmed during the winter, are kept well ventilated during the summer, and are used during the day as places of conversation, work, or for the meals of the prisoners. The upper stories are used as immense dormitories, ten or twelve feet high, with dry and shining floors; two rows of iron beds are there arranged, and excellent bedding it is,—consisting of a palliasse, a soft and thick mattrass, a bolster, white linen sheets, and a warm woollen blanket. At the sight of these establishments, comprising all the requisites for comfort and health, we are much surprised, in spite of ourselves; being accustomed to suppose that prisons are miserable, dirty, unwholesome, and dark. This is a mistake. It is such dogholes as that occupied by Morel the lapidary, and in which so many poor and honest workmen languish in exhaustion, compelled to give up their truckle-bed to a sick wife, and to leave, with hopeless despair, their wretched, famishing children, shuddering with cold in their infected straw—that is miserable, dark, dirty, and pestilent! The same contrast holds with respect to the physiognomy of the inhabitants of these two abodes. Incessantly occupied with the wants of their family, which they can scarcely supply from day to day, seeing a destructive competition lessen their wages, the laborious artisans become dejected, dispirited: the hour of rest does not sound for them, and a kind of somnolent lassitude alone breaks in upon their over-tasked labour. Then, on awakening from this painful lethargy, they find themselves face to face with the same overwhelming thoughts of the present, and the same uneasiness for the future. But the prisoner, indifferent to the past, happy with the life he leads, certain of the future (for he can assure it by an offence or a crime), regretting his liberty, doubtless, but finding much compensation in the actual enjoyment, certain of taking with him when he quits prison a considerable sum of money, gained by easy and moderate labour, esteemed, or rather dreaded, by his companions, in proportion to his depravity and perversity, the prisoner, on the contrary, will always be gay and careless. Again, we ask, what does he want? Does he not find in prison good shelter, good bed, good food, high wages,* easy work, and, especially, *society at his choice*—a society, we repeat, which measures his consideration by the magnitude of his crimes? A hardened convict knows neither misery, hunger, nor cold. What is to him the horror he inspires honest persons withal? He does not see, does not know them. His crimes made his glory, his influence his strength, with the ruffians in the midst of whom he will henceforward pass his life. Why should he fear shame? Instead of the serious and charitable remonstrances which might compel him to blush for and repent the past, he hears the ferocious applauses which encourage him to theft and murder. Scarcely imprisoned, he plans

* High wages. If we reflect that, with all expenses paid, a prisoner may gain from five to ten sous a-day. How many workmen are there who can save such a sum?

fresh crimes. What can be more logical? If discovered, and at once apprehended, he will find the repose, the bodily supplies of a prison, and his joyous and daring associates of crime and debauchery. If his experience in crimes be less than that of others, does he for that evince the less remorse? it follows that he is exposed to brutal scoffing, infernal taunts, and horrible threats. And—a thing so rare that it has become the exception to the rule—if the prisoner leaves this fearful pandemonium with the firm resolution to return to the paths of honesty by excessive labour, courage, patience, and honesty, and has been able to conceal the infamy of his past career, the meeting with one of his old comrades in gaol is sufficient to overturn this good intention for the restoration of his character, so painfully struggled for. And in this way. A hardened, discharged convict proposes a *job* to a repentant comrade; the latter, in spite of bitter menaces, refuses this criminal association, forthwith an anonymous information reveals the life of the unfortunate fellow who was desirous, at every sacrifice, of concealing and expiating a first fault by honourable behaviour. Then, exposed to the contempt, or, at least, the distrust, of those whose good will he had acquired by dint of industry and probity, this man, reduced to distress, and urged by want, yielding at length to incessant temptations, although nearly restored to society, will again fall, and for ever, into the depths of that abyss whence he had escaped with such difficulty. In the following scenes we shall endeavour to demonstrate the monstrous and inevitable consequences of *confinement in masses*. After ages of barbarous experiments and pernicious hesitations, it seemed suddenly understood how irrational it is to plunge into an atmosphere of deepest vice persons whom a pure and salubrious air could alone save. How many centuries to discover that, in placing in dense contact diseased beings, we redouble the intensity of their malignity, which is thus rendered incurable! How many centuries to discover that there is, in a word, but one remedy for this overwhelming leprosy which threatens society—ISOLATION! We should esteem ourselves happy if our feeble voice could be, if not relied upon, at least spread amongst all those which, more imposing, more eloquent than our own, demand with such just and impatient urgency, the entire and unqualified application of the *cell system*.

One day, perchance, society will know that wickedness is an accidental, not an organic malady; that crimes are almost always the results of perverted instincts, impulses, still good in their essence, but falsified, rendered evil, by ignorance, egotism, or the carelessness of governments; and that the health of the soul, like that of the body, is unquestionably kept subordinate to the laws of a healthy and preserving system of control. God bestows on all passions that strive for predominance, strong appetites, the desire to be at ease, and it is for society to balance and satisfy these wants. The man who only participates in strength, good will, and health, has a right—a sovereign right—to have his labour justly remunerated, in a way that shall assure to him not the superfluities, but the necessaries of life—the means of continuing healthy and strong, active and industrious—and consequently, honest and good, because his condition is rendered happy. The gloomy regions of misery and ignorance are peopled with morbid beings with withered hearts. Purify these moral sewers, spread instruction, the inducement to labour, fair wages, just rewards, and then these

unhealthy faces, these perishing frames, will be restored to virtue, which is the health, the life of the soul.

* * * * * *

Let us now introduce the reader into the room in the prison of La Force in which the prisoners are allowed to see persons who visit them. It is a dark place, partitioned in its length into two equal parts, by a narrow-grated division. One of these divisions communicates with the interior of the prison, and is the place for the prisoners. The other communicates with the turnkey's lobby, and is devoted to the persons admitted to visit the prisoners. These interviews and conversations take place through the double iron grating of the reception room, in presence of the turnkey, who remains in the interior, at the extremity of the passage. The appearance of the prisoners, who were in this room on the day in

question, offered great contrasts. Some were clad in wretched attire, others seemed to belong to the working class, and some to the wealthy citizen body. The same contrasts were remarkable amongst the visitors to the prisoners, who were nearly all women. The prisoners generally appear less downcast than the visitors, for, strange and sad to say, yet proved by experience, there is but little sorrow or shame left after the experience of three or four days spent in *prison in society*. Those who most dreaded this hideous community habituate themselves to it quickly: the contagion gains upon them. Surrounded by degraded beings, hearing only the language of infamy, a kind of ferocious rivalry excites them; and, either to emulate their companions in the struggle for brutalism, or to make themselves giddy by the usual drunkenness, the new-comers almost invariably display as much depravity and recklessness as the *habitués* of the prison.

Let us return to the reception-room. Notwithstanding the noisy hum of a great many conversations carried on in under tones on each side of the divisions, prisoners and visitors, after some experience, are able to converse with each other without being for a moment disturbed by, or attentive to, the conversation of their neighbours, which creates a kind of secrecy in the midst of this noisy interchange of words, each being compelled to hear the individual who addressed him, but not to hear a word of what was said around him. Amongst the prisoners called into the reception-room by visitors, the one the farthest off from the turnkey was Nicolas Martial. To the extreme depression with which he was seized on his apprehension, had succeeded the most brazen assurance. Already the detestable and contagious influence of a prison *in common* bore its fruits. No doubt had he been at once conveyed to a solitary cell, this wretch, still under the influence of his first terror, and alone with the thought of his crimes, fearful of impending punishment, might have experienced, if not repentance, at least that wholesome dread from which nothing would have distracted him. And who knows what incessant, compulsory meditation may produce on a guilty mind, reflecting on the crimes committed, and the punishment that is to follow! Far from this, thrown into the midst of a horde of bandits, in whose eyes the least sign of repentance is cowardice—or, rather, *treason*—which they make him dearly expiate; for, in their savage obduracy, their senseless bravado, they consider every man as a spy on them, who, sad and disconsolate, regretting his fault, does not join in their audacious recklessness, and trembles at their contact—thrown into the midst of these miscreants, Nicolas Martial, who had for a long time, by report, known the prison manners, overcame his weakness, and wished to appear worthy of a name already celebrated in the annals of robbery and murder. Several old offenders had known his father, who had been executed, and others his brother, who was at the galleys; he was received and instantly patronised by these veterans in crime with savage interest. This fraternal reception between murderer and murderer elevated the widow's son; the praises bestowed on the hereditary infamy of his family intoxicated him. Soon forgetting, in this horrible mood, the future that threatened him, he only remembered his past crimes to glory in them, and elevate himself still higher in the eyes of his companions. The expression of Nicolas's physiognomy was then as insolent as that of his visitor was disturbed and alarmed.

This visitor was Daddy Micou, the receiver and lodging-house keeper in the Passage de la Brasserie, into whose abode Madame de Fermont and her daughter, victims of Jacques Ferrand's cupidity, had been compelled to retreat. Father Micou knew the penalties to which he was amenable for having many a time and oft obtained at low prices the fruits of the robberies of Nicolas, and many others of his stamp. The widow's son being apprehended, the receiver felt he was almost at the mercy of the ruffian, who might impeach him as a regular buyer. Although this accusation could not be supported by flagrant proofs, still it was not the less dangerous, the less dreaded by Daddy Micou, and he had thus instantly obeyed the *orders* which Nicolas had transmitted to him by a discharged prisoner.

"Ah, ah! how goes it, Daddy Micou?" said the brigand.

"At your service, my good fellow," replied the receiver, eagerly. "As soon as I saw the person you sent to me, I directly——"

"Oh, you are becoming ceremonious, daddy!" said Nicolas, with impatience. "Why is this, because I'm in trouble?"

"No, no, my lad—no, no!" replied the receiver, who was not anxious to seem on terms of familiarity with this ruffian.

"Come, come, be as familiar as usual, or I shall think you have forgotten our intimacy, and that would break my heart."

"Well, well," said Micou, with a groan, "I directly went about your little commissions."

"That's all right, daddy. I knew well enough that you would not forget your friends. And my tobacco?"

"I have left two pounds at the lodge, my boy."

"Is it good?"

"Cannot be better."

"And the knuckle of ham?"

"Left at the lodge, also, with a four-pound white loaf; and I have added something that will surprise you, in the shape of a dozen hard eggs and a Dutch cheese."

"This is what I call doing the thing like a friend! And the wine?"

"Six bottles of capital. But, you know, you will only have one bottle a-day."

"Well, that can't be helped, and so one must make up one's mind to it."

"I hope you are satisfied with me, my boy?"

"Certain, and I shall be so again, and for ever, Father Micou; for the ham, the cheese, the eggs, and the wine will only last just so long as it takes to swallow them; but, as a friend of mine remarked, when they are gone there'll be more where they came from, thanks to you, who will always do the handsome thing so long as I do the same."

"What! you expect——"

"That in two or three days you will renew my little stock, daddy dear."

"Devil burn me if I do! it's all very good for once——"

"For once! what d'ye mean, man? why, ham and wine are always good, you know that very well."

"Certainly, but I have not undertaken to feed you in delicacies."

"Oh, Daddy Micou, that's shabby—indecent. What, refuse me ham! one who has so often brought you *double tresse* (stolen lead)!"

"Hush, hush! you mischievous fellow," cried the alarmed receiver.

"No, I'll put the question to the *big-wig* (the judge). I'll say to him, only imagine now, sir, that Daddy Micou——"

"Hush! hush!" exclaimed the receiver, seeing with equal alarm and anger that Nicolas was much disposed to abuse the influence which their guilty companionship gave him; "I'll agree—I will renew your provision when it is consumed."

"That's all right, and what's fair. And you mustn't forget, too, to send some coffee to mother and Calabash, who are at Saint-Lazare; they like a cup in a morning, and they'll miss it."

"What more? Would you ruin me, you extortionate fellow?"

"Oh, just as you like, Daddy Micou,—don't say another word, but I shall ask the big-wig——"

"Well, then, they shall have the coffee," said the receiver, interrupting him. "But devil take you! Accursed be the day when I first knew you!"

"Old boy, I say quite the contrary. I am delighted to have your

valuable acquaintance at this particular moment. I revere you as a nursing father."

"I hope you have nothing more to ask of me?" said Micou, with bitterness.

"Yes: say to my mother and sister that if I was frightened when they apprehended me, I am no longer so, but as determined as they two are."

"I'll say so. Any thing more?"

"Stay another moment or two. I forgot to ask you for a couple of

pairs of warm woollen stockings,—you'd be sorry if I caught cold, shouldn't you?"

"I should be glad if you were dead."

"Thankye, daddy, thankye! but that pleasure is yet to come, and to-day I'm alive and kicking, and inclined to take things easy. If they serve me as they did my father, at least I shall have enjoyed my life while it lasted."

"It's a nice life yours is!"

"Superb! since I have been here I've enjoyed myself like a king. If we had lamps and fireworks, they would have lighted them up, and fired them off in my honour, when they knew I was the son of the famous Martial who was guillotined."

"How affecting! what a glorious parentage!"

"Why, d'ye see, there are many dukes and marquisses. Why, then, shouldn't we have our nobility, too?—such as us!" said the ruffian, with bitter irony.

"To be sure, and *Charlot* (the headsman) will give you your letters of nobility on the Place du Palais."

"You may be sure it won't be the gaol chaplain. But in prison we should have the nobility of *top-sawyers* (noted robbers) to be thought much of, if not you are looked upon as nobody at all. You should only see how they behave to those who are not *tip-tops* and give themselves airs. Now there's in here a chap called Germain, a young fellow, who appears disgusted with us, and seems to despise us all. Let him take care of his hide! he's a sulky hound, and they say he is a *nose* (a spy); if he is, they'll screw his nose round, just by way of warning."

"Germain? a young man called Germain?"

"Yes: d'ye know him? Is he one of us? If so, in spite of his looks, we——"

"I don't know him; but if he is the Germain I have heard speak of, his affair is settled."

"How?"

"Why he has only just escaped from a plot which Velu and the Stout-Cripple laid for him lately."

"Why?"

"I don't know, but they said that in the country somewhere he had tricked one of their *pals*."

"I was sure of it, Germain is a spy. Well, we'll spy him! I'll go and tell our friends, that'll set them sharper against him. By the way, how does Gros-Boiteux get on with your lodgers?"

"Thank heaven, I have got rid of him—a blackguard! you'll see him here to-day or to-morrow."

"All right—how we shall laugh! He's a boy who is never taken aback!"

"It's because I knew that he would find this Germain here that I said his affair was settled—if it's the same chap."

"Why have they got hold of the Gros-Boiteux?"

"For a robbery committed with a discharged convict, who wanted to turn honest and work. Well, you see, the Gros-Boiteux soon got him in a string; he is such a vicious devil, the Boiteux! I am certain it was he

who broke open the trunk of the two women who live in the little room on my fourth floor."

"What women?—ah! yes, two women. You was smitten by the young 'un, I remember, you old vagabond, because you thought her so nice."

"They'll not smite any body any more, for by this time the mother must be dead, and the daughter is scarcely alive. I shall lose a fortnight's rent, and I shan't give a sous to pay for their burial. I've had so many losses, without talking of the little matters you *entreat* me to give you and your family, that my affairs are quite disarranged. I've had the luck of it this year."

"Pooh! pooh! you are always complaining, old gentleman; you who are as rich as Crœsus. But don't let me detain you."

"You're polite."

"You'll call and tell me how mother and Calabash are when you bring me my other provisions?"

"Yes, if I must."

"Ah, I'd nearly forgot: whilst you're about it, bring me a new cap, of plaid velvet, with an acorn at top; mine's regularly done for."

"Come, now you're laughing at me."

"No, daddy, by no means: I want a plaid velvet cap. That's my wish."

"Then you're resolved to make a beggar of me?"

"Come, I say, Micou, don't get out of temper about it. It's only yes or no—I do not force you, but—you understand?"

The receiver, reflecting that he was at the mercy of Nicolas, rose, fearing that if he prolonged his visit he would be exposed to fresh demands.

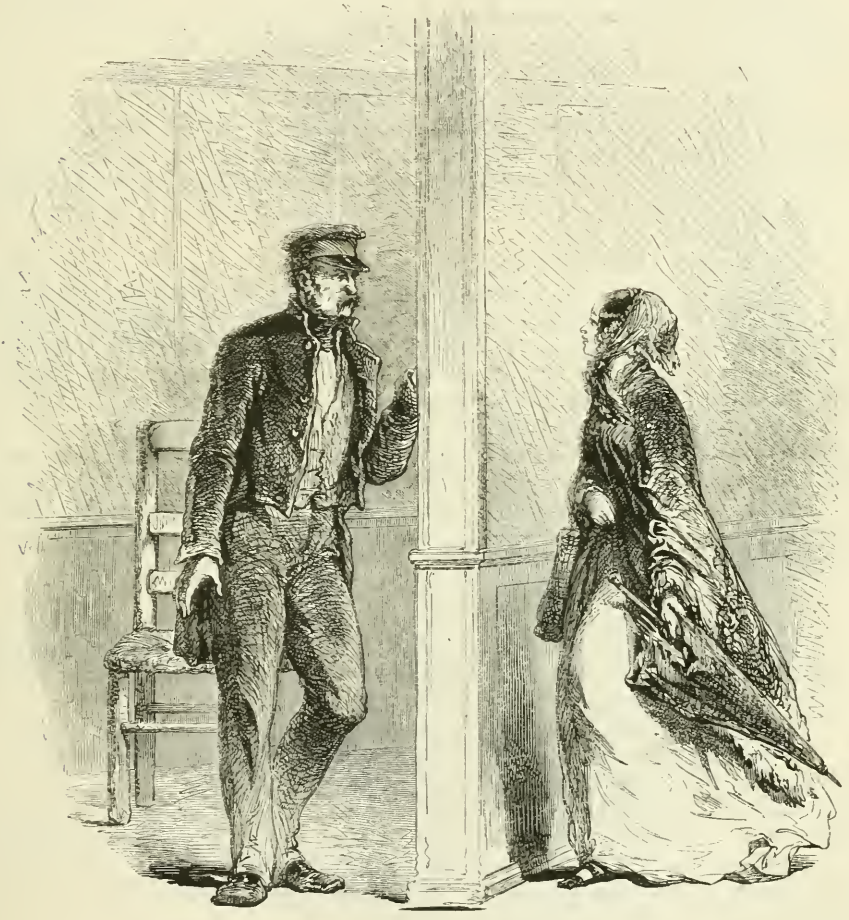
"You shall have your cap," he replied; "but mind, if you ask me for

any thing more, I will give you nothing,—let what will occur, you'll suffer as much as I shall."

"Make your mind easy, I'll not *make you sing* (force you to give money under the threat of certain disclosures) more than is sufficient, for you not to lose your voice; for that would be a pity, you *sing* so well."

The receiver went away, shrugging his shoulders with rage, and the turnkey conducted Nicolas back to the interior of the prison.

At the moment when Micou quitted the reception-room, Rigolette entered it. The turnkey, a man about forty years of age, an old



soldier, with stern and marked features, was dressed in a round jacket, with a blue cap and trousers; two silver stars were embroidered on the collar and facings of his jacket. At the sight of the grisette the face of this man brightened up, and assumed an expression of benevolence. He

had always been struck by the grace, gentleness, and touching kindness with which Rigolette consoled Germain when she came there to see him. Germain was, besides, not an ordinary prisoner: his reserve, his peaceable demeanour, and his melancholy, inspired the persons about the prison with deep interest—an interest which they did not manifest, for fear of exposing him to the ill-treatment of his brutal companions, who, as we have said, looked upon him with mistrusting hate. It was raining in torrents, but, thanks to her goloshes and umbrella, Rigolette had boldly faced the wind and rain.

"What a shocking day, my poor girl!" said the turnkey, kindly. "It requires a good deal of courage to leave home such weather as this."

"When we think as we come along of the pleasure we shall give a poor prisoner, we don't think much about the weather, sir."

"I need not ask you whom you have come to see?"

"Certainly not. And how is poor Germain?"

"Why, my dear, I have seen many prisoners: they have been sad for a day—two days, perhaps—and then gradually got into the same way as the others; and those who were most out of sorts at first often ended by becoming the merriest of all. But M. Germain is not one of these, he has still that melancholy air."

"How sorry I am to hear it!"

"When I'm on duty in the yards, I look at him from the corner of my eye, he is always alone. I have already told you that you should advise him not to do so, but to resolve on conversing with the others, or it will end with his becoming suspected and ill-used by them. We keep a close look-out, but a mischievous blow is soon given."

"Oh, sir, is there any danger threatens him?" cried Rigolette.

"Not precisely, but these ruffians see that he is not one of them, and hate him because he has an honest and proud look."

"Yet I advised him to do what you told me, sir, and make up his mind to talk to some of the least wicked! but he cannot help it, he cannot get over his repugnance."

"He is wrong—wrong! a struggle is so soon begun."

"Can't he, then, be separated from the others?"

"For the last two or three days, since I have seen their ill will towards him, I advised him to place himself what we call *à la pistole*—that is, in a room."

"Well?"

"I had not thought of one thing. A whole row of cells is undergoing repair, and the others are full."

"But these wretches may kill him!" said Rigolette, her eyes filling with tears. "And if, by chance, he had any protectors, what could they do for him, sir?"

"Nothing, but enable him to obtain what these debtors who can pay for it obtain,—a chamber, *à la pistole*."

"Alas, then, he is lost, if they hate him in the prison."

"Oh, don't be downhearted, we will look well to him. But I repeat, my dear, do advise him to familiarise himself a little—the first step is half the battle."

"I will advise him as strongly as I can, sir. But for a good and

honest heart it is very hard, you know, to familiarise itself with such people."

"Of two evils we must choose the least. Now I will fetch M. Germain. But now I think of it," said the turnkey, "there are only two visitors; wait until they are gone, there'll not be any more to-day, for it is two o'clock. I will then fetch M. Germain, and you can talk at your ease. I can then, when you are alone, let him come into the passage, so that you will be separated by one grating instead of two. Won't that be better?"

"Ah, sir, how kind you are, and how much I thank you!"

"Hush! do not let any one hear you, or they may be jealous. Sit down there at the end of the bench, and when this man and woman have gone, I will tell M. Germain."

The turnkey returned to his post inside the grating, and Rigolette sat down very melancholy at the end of the visitor's bench.

Whilst the grisette is awaiting the coming of Germain, we will allow the reader to overhear the conversation of the prisoners who remained there after the departure of Nicolas Martial.

CHAPTER XLV.

PIQUE-VINAIGRE.

The prisoner who was beside Barbillon was a man about forty-five years of age, thin, mean-looking, with a keen, intelligent, jovial, merry face. He had an enormous mouth, almost entirely toothless; and, when he spoke, he worked it from side to side, very much after the style of

those orators who are accustomed to harangue from booths at fairs. His nose was flat, his head disproportionately large and nearly bald: he wore an old grey knit worsted waistcoat, a pair of trousers of indescribable colour, torn and patched in a thousand places; his feet, half wrapped up

in pieces of old linen, were thrust into wooden shoes. This man, Fortuné Gobert, called *Pique-Vinaigre*, formerly a juggler, a convict freed after condemnation for the crime of uttering false money, was charged with having broken from gaol and committed violent burglary. Having been confined but very few days in La Force, Pique-Vinaigre already filled the office of *story-teller*, to the general satisfaction of his fellow-prisoners. Now story-tellers have become very rare, but formerly each ward had usually, for a slight general subscription, its official story-teller, who, by his narrations, made the long winter evenings appear less tedious when the prisoners went to bed at sunset.

If it be curious to note the desire for these fictions which these outcasts display, it is yet a more singular thing to reflect upon the bearing of these recitals. Men corrupted to the very marrow, thieves, and murderers, prefer especially the *histories* in which are expressed generous, heroic sentiments, recitals in which weakness and goodness are avenged in fierce retribution. It is the same thing with women of lost reputation: they are singularly fond of simple, touching, and sentimental details, and almost invariably refuse to read obscene books.

Pique-Vinaigre excelled in that kind of heroic tales in which weakness, after a thousand trials, concludes by triumphing over persecution. He possessed, besides, a deep fund of satire, which had procured for him his name—his repartees being very frequently ironical or merry. He had just entered the reception-room. Opposite to him, on the other side of the grating, was a female of about thirty-five years of age, of pale, mild, and interesting countenance, meanly but cleanly clad. She was weeping bitterly, and held a handkerchief to her eyes. Pique-Vinaigre looked at her with a mixture of impatience and affection.

"Come, Jeanne," he said, "do not play the child. It is sixteen years since we met, and to keep your handkerchief up to your eyes is not the way for us to know each other again."

"Brother—my poor, dear Fortuné! I am choking—I cannot speak."

"Ah, nonsense! What ails you?"

His sister repressed her sobs, wiped her eyes, and looking at him with astonishment, replied, "What ails me? What, when I find you again in prison, where you have already been fifteen years!"

"True. It is six months to-day since I left Melun; and I didn't call upon you in Paris because the capital was forbidden to me."

"Why did you leave Beaugency when you were under surveillance?"

"In the first place, Jeanne, since the gratings are between us, you must fancy I have embraced you, squeezed you in my arms, as a man ought to do who has not seen his sister for an eternity. Now let us talk. A prisoner at Melun, who is called the Gros-Boiteux, told me that there was at Beaugency an old convict of his acquaintance, who employed the freed prisoners in a factory of white lead. Those who work at it, in a month or two, catch the *lead-cholic*. One in three of those attacked die. It is true that others die also; but they take their time about it and get on, sometimes as long as a year or even eighteen months. Then the trade is better paid than most others, and there are fellows who hold out at it for two or three years. But they are elders—patriarchs—of the *white-leaders*. They die, it is true—but that is all."

"And why did you choose a trade so dangerous that they die at it?"

"What could I do? When I went to Melun for that well-known job of the forged coin I was a thimble-rigger. As in gaol there was no scope for my line of business, and I am not stronger than a good stout flea, they put me to making children's toys. There was a tradesman in Paris who found it very advantageous to have his wooden trumpets and swords made by the prisoners. Why, I must have made half the wooden swords used

by the children of Paris; and I was great in the trumpet line. Rattles, too—why, with two of my manufacture I could have set on edge the teeth of a whole battalion! Well, when my time was up I was a first-rate maker of penny trumpets, and my only resource was making child's play-things. Now, supposing that a whole town, young and old, were inclined to play *tur-tu-tu-tu* on my trumpets, I should still have had a good deal of trouble to earn a livelihood; and then I could not have induced a whole population to continue playing the trumpet from morning to night."

"You are still such a jester!"

"Better joke than cry. Well, then, seeing that at forty leagues from Paris my trade of juggler was no more useful to me than my trumpets, I requested the surveillance at Beaugency, intending to become a *white-leader*. It is a trade that gives you indigestion enough to send you mad; but until one bursts one lives, and that is always something, and it was better than turning thief. I am neither brave nor strong enough to thieve, and it was from pure accident that I did the *thing* I have just mentioned to you."

"And yet you had the courage to take up with a deadly trade! Come now, Fortuné, you wish to make yourself out worse than you are."

"I thought that the malady would have so little to take hold of in me that it would go elsewhere, and that I should become one of the patriarchal *white-leaders*. Well, when I came out of prison, I found my earnings had considerably increased by telling stories."

"So you told us. You remember how it amused poor old mother?"

"Dear soul! she never suspected that I was at Melun?"

"Never. She thought you had gone abroad."

"Why, my girl, my follies were my father's fault, who dressed me up as a clown to help in his mountebank displays, to swallow tow and spit

fire, which did not allow me spare time to form acquaintance with the sons of the peers of France; and so I fell into bad company. But to return to

Beaugency. When once I had left Melun, like the rest, I thought I must see some fun; if not, what was the use of my money? Well, I reached Beaugency, with scarcely a sou in my pocket. I asked for Velu, the friend of Gros-Boiteux, the head of the manufactory. Your servant! There was no longer any white-lead factory; it had killed eleven persons in the year, and the old convict had shut up shop. So here I was in the middle of this city, with my talent for trumpet-making as my only means of existence, and my discharge from prison as my only certificate of recommendation. I did my best to procure work, but in vain. One called me a thief, another a beggar, a third said I had escaped from gaol; all turned their backs upon me. So I had nothing to do but die of hunger in a city which I was not to leave for five years. Seeing this, I broke my *ban*, and came to Paris to *utilise* my talents. As I had not the means to travel in a coach and four, I came begging and tramping all the way, avoiding the gens-d'armes as I would a mad dog. I had luck, and reached Auteuil without accident. I was very tired, hungry as a wolf, and dressed, as you may see, not in the height of the fashion." And Pique-Vinaigre glanced comically at his rags. "I had not a sou, and was liable to be taken up as a vagabond. Well, *ma foi!* an occasion presented itself; the devil tempted me, and, in spite of my cowardice——"

"Enough, brother—enough!" said his sister, fearing lest the turnkey, might hear his dangerous confession.

"Are you afraid they listen?" he said. "Be tranquil; I have nothing to conceal. I was taken in the act."

"Alas!" said Jeanne, weeping bitterly; "how calmly you say this!"

"If I spoke warmly what should I gain by it? Come, listen to reason, Jeanne. Must I have to console you?"

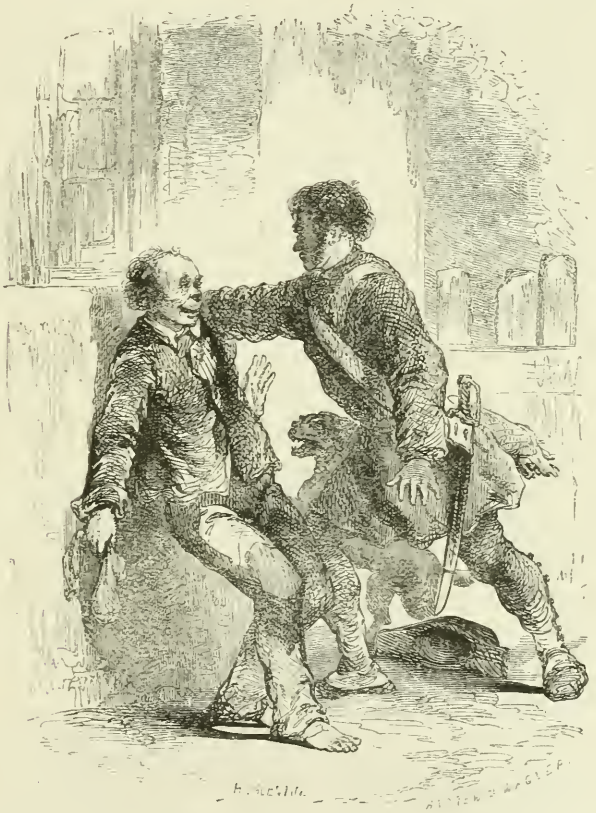
Jeanne wiped her eyes and sighed.

"Well, to go back to my affair," continued Pique-Vinaigre. "I had nearly reached Auteuil, in the dusk. I could not go any farther, and I did not wish to enter Paris but at night; so I sat down behind a hedge to rest myself, and reflect on my plan of campaign. My reflections sent me to sleep, and when the sound of voices awoke me it was night. I listened: it was a man and woman, who were talking as they went along on the other side of the hedge. The man said to the woman, 'Who do you think would come and rob us? Haven't we left the house alone a hundred times?' 'Yes,' replied the woman; 'but then we hadn't a hundred francs in the drawers.' 'Who knows that, you fool?' says the husband. 'You are right,' replies the wife; and on they went. *Ma foi!* the occasion seemed to me too favourable to lose, and there was no danger. I waited until they got a little farther on, and then came from behind the hedge, and, looking twenty paces behind me, I saw a small cottage, which I was sure must be the house with the hundred francs, as it was the only habitation in sight. Auteuil was about five hundred yards off. I said to myself, 'Courage, old boy—there is no one. Then it is night; if there is no watch-dog (you know I was always afraid of dogs), why the job is as good as done. Luckily there was no dog. To make sure I knocked at the door. Nothing. This encouraged me. The shutters were closed on the ground-floor, but I put my stick between and forced them. I got into the window, and, in the room, the fire was still alight. So I saw the

drawers, but no key. With the tongs I forced the lock, and, under a heap of linen, I found the prize, wrapped in an old woollen stocking. I did not think of taking any thing else, but, jumping out of the window, I alighted on the back of the garde-champêtre, who was returning home."

"What a misfortune!"

"The moon had risen. He saw me jump from the window and seized me. He was a fellow who could have eaten a dozen such as I was. Too great a coward to resist I surrendered quietly. I had the stocking still in



my hand, and he heard the money chink, took it, put it in his gamebag, and made me accompany him to Auteuil. We reached the mayor's with a crowd of blackguards and gens-d'armes. The owners of the cottage were fetched, and they made their depositions. There was no means of denial; so I confessed every thing and signed the depositions, and they put me on handcuffs and I was brought here."

"In prison again, and for a long time, perhaps?"

"Listen to me, Jeanne, for I will not deceive you. I may as well tell you at once; for it is no longer an affair of prison."

"Why not?"

"Why, the relapse, the breaking-in and entry into a dwelling-house at night, the lawyer told me, is a complete affair, and I shall have fifteen or twenty years at the galleys, and the public exposure into the bargain."

"The galleys—and you so weak? Why, you'll die!"

"And suppose I had been with the white-lead party?"

"But the galleys—the galleys!"

"It is a prison in the open air, with a red shirt instead of a brown one; and then I have always had a curiosity to see the sea!"

"But the public exposure! To be subject to the contempt of all the world! Oh, my poor brother!" And the poor woman wept bitterly.

"Come, come, Jeanne, be composed; it is an uncomfortable quarter of an hour to pass. But you know I am used to see crowds. When I played with my cups and balls, I always had a crowd round me; so I'll fancy I am thimble-rigging, and if it has too much effect on me I'll close my eyes, and that will seem as if no one was looking at me."

Speaking with this derision, the unhappy man affected this insensibility in order to console his sister. For a man accustomed to the manners of prisons, and in whom all shame is utterly dead, the *bagne* (galleys) is, in fact, only a *change of shirt*, as Pique-Vinaigre said, with frightful truth. Many prisoners in the central prisons even preferring the bagne, because of the riotous life they lead, often committing attempts at murder in order to be sent to Brest or Toulon.

"Twenty years at the galleys!" repeated Pique-Vinaigre's poor sister.

"Take comfort, Jeanne, they will only pay me as I deserve. I am too weak to be put to hard labour, and if there is no manufactory of wooden trumpets and swords as at Melun, why I shall be set to some easy work; they will employ me at the infirmary. I am not a troublesome fellow, but a good, easy chap; and I shall tell my stories as I do here, and shall be *esteemed by my chiefs and adored by my comrades*, and I will send you carved cocoa-nuts and straw-boxes for my nephews and nieces."

"If you had only written to me that you were coming to Paris, I would have tried to conceal you until you found work."

"*Pardieu!* I meant to have gone to you, but I preferred arriving with my hands full—for I see you do not ride in your carriage. Well, and your children—and your husband?"

"Has left me these three years, after having sold off every stick, not leaving me or the children one single thing but a straw palliasse."

"Poor Jeanne! How have you managed alone with three children?"

"Why, I have suffered very much. I worked at my business as a trimming-maker as well as I could, the neighbours helping me a little, watching my children when I went out. And then I, who haven't much luck, had a bit of good fortune once in my life; but it was no avail, because of my husband."

"How was that?"

"My employer had spoken of my trouble to one of his customers, telling him how my husband had left me with nothing, after having sold all our furniture, and that, in spite of this, I was working as hard as I could to bring up my children. One day when I returned what did I find? Why, my room fitted up again, a good bed, furniture, and linen: it was the kind customer of my employer."

"Poor sister! why didn't you write and tell me of your misfortune; and then, instead of spending my money, I would have sent you some."

"What! I free to ask of you a prisoner?"

"Why not? I was fed, clothed, lodged at the cost of government: all I gained was so much profit. But knowing my brother-in-law was a good workman, and you a good manager and worker, I was quite easy, and melted my 'tin' with my eyes shut and my mouth open."

"My husband was a good workman, that is true; but he became dissipated. However, thanks to this unexpected aid, I took courage again. My eldest girl began to earn a little, and we were happy, except when we remembered that you were at Melun. Work went well with us, and my children were well clad and wanted for nothing hardly, and that gave me good heart; and I had actually saved thirty-three francs, when suddenly my husband returned. I had not seen him for a year; and when he found me so well off and tidily dressed, he stood for nothing, but took my money and lived with us without working, getting drunk every day, and beating me when I complained. And that is not all. He gave up a small room adjoining ours to a woman with whom he lived openly as his mistress; so I had that indignity to endure for the second time. He

soon began to make away with the few poor things I had managed to get together; so, foreseeing what would be the end of such conduct, I went to a lawyer who lived in the same house, and begged him to advise me how to act to prevent my husband from taking the very bed from me and my children."

"Why, there needed no lawyer, I should think, to tell you that the only thing you had to do was to turn your husband out of your doors."

"Ah, but I could not—the law gave me no power to do so. The lawyer told me that, as 'head of the family,' my husband could take up his abode wherever I dwelt, and was not compelled to labour unless he liked; that it was very hard for me to have to maintain him and endure his ill-treatment into the bargain, but that he recommended me to submit to it, though certainly the circumstance of his having a mistress living under the same roof entitled me to demand separation from 'bed and board,' as he called it; and further, that as I would bring witnesses to prove his having repeatedly struck me and otherwise ill-treated me, I could institute a suit against him, but that it would cost me, at the very least, from four to five hundred francs to obtain a perfect separation from him. Only think what a sum—as much as I should earn in a year! And who would lend me so much money, which would have to be repaid heaven knows how? for four or five hundred francs is a perfect fortune."

"Yet there is one very simple means of amassing the money," replied Pique-Vinaigre, bitterly; "that of living upon air during the twelve months it would take you to earn that sum, working all the same, but denying yourself even the necessaries of life; and I am only surprised the lawyer did not advise you to starve yourself and your children, or any other kind-hearted expediency."

"You always make a jest of every thing, brother!"

"This time, however, I am not in a jesting humour. It is scandalous that the law should be so expensive to poor creatures such as we. Now, just look at yourself—a good and affectionate mother, striving by every means in your power to bring up your children honestly and creditably; your husband a bad, lazy fellow, who, not content with stripping you of all you earn, that he may spend his time in drinking and all sorts of loose pleasures, beats and ill-uses you into the bargain. Well, you apply to the justice of your country for protection for yourself and your children. 'Ah,' say the lawyers, 'yours is a hard case, and your husband is a worthless vagabond, and you shall have justice. But then you must pay five hundred francs for that same justice—five hundred francs, mind; precisely all your utmost labour can obtain to nourish yourself and family for a year. I tell you what, Jeanne, all this proves the truth of the old saying, that 'There are but two sorts of people—those who are hanged, and those who deserve to be!'"

Rigolette, alone and pensively inclined, had not lost a word of all that tale of woe breathed by the poor, suffering, and patient wife into her brother's ear; while her naturally kind heart deeply sympathised with all she heard, and she fully resolved upon relating the whole history to Rodolph the very first time she saw him, feeling quite sure of his ready and benevolent aid in succouring them. Deeply interested in the mournful fate of the sister of Pique-Vinaigre, she could not take her eyes from the poor

woman's face, and was endeavouring to draw a little closer to her; but unluckily, just at that moment, a fresh visitant entering the room, inquired for a prisoner, and while the person he wished to see was sent for, he very coolly seated himself on the bench between Jeanne and the grisette, who, at the sight of the individual who so unceremoniously interrupted her making closer acquaintance with her neighbour, felt a degree of surprise almost amounting to fear, for in him she recognised one of the bailiffs sent by Jacques Ferrand to arrest poor Morel the lapidary. This circumstance, recalling as it did to the mind of Rigolette the implacable enemy of Germain, redoubled her sadness, which had been in some manner diverted while listening to the touching recital of the unfortunate sister of Pique-Vinaigre.

Retreating from the fresh arrival as far as she could, the grisette leaned her back against the wall, and once more relapsed into her mournful ruminations.

"Look here, Jeanne!" cried Pique-Vinaigre, whose mirthful, pleasure-loving countenance was suddenly overcast by a deep gloom; "I am by nature neither very strong nor very courageous; but, certainly, if I had chanced to have been by when your husband so shamefully treated you, I don't think I should have let him slip through my fingers without leaving my mark. But you were too good for him, and you put up with more than you ought!"

"Why, what would you have had me do? I was obliged to endure what I could not avoid. So long as there remained an article that would fetch money did my husband sell it, even to the frock of my little girl, and then repaired to the alehouse with his mistress."

"But why did you give him your daily earnings?—you should have hid it from him."

"So I did; but he beat me so dreadfully that I was obliged to give it him. I cared less for the blows he gave me than because I dreaded his

doing me some bodily injury, such as breaking my arm and dislocating my wrist, that would have hindered me from working; and then, what would have become of my poor children? Suppose I had been compelled to go to an hospital, they must have perished with hunger. So, you see, brother, I thought it was better to give up my earnings to my husband than run the risk of being lamed by him."

"Poor woman! People talk of martyrs, but what martyrdom can exceed what you have endured?"

"And yet I can truly say I never injured a living creature, and my only desire was to work hard and do my duty to my husband and children. But it is no use thinking about it; there are fortunate and unfortunate persons, just the same as there are good people and bad people in the world!"

"True; and it is a beautiful sight to see how happy and prosperous the good always are — ar'n't they, sister? And do you now believe yourself for ever freed from your scoundrel of a husband?"

"I trust so. He staid till he had sold even my bedstead, and the cradle in which my youngest child lay. But when I think that even more than that, he wished——"

"What did he wish?"

"When I say *he*, I ought rather to tell you that it was rather that wicked woman who urged him on. One day he said to me, 'I tell you what, when folks have a pretty girl of fifteen belonging to them, they are cursed fools if they do not turn her to good account.'"

"Oh, to be sure! When he had sold the poor girl's clothes, he was willing to sell her also."

"When I heard him say those dreadful words I lost all command over myself, and, I promise you, I did not spare him all the reproaches he merited. And when his vile paramour took upon herself to interfere, and say that my husband had a right to do what he liked with his own child, I could contain myself no longer; but I fell with all my fury on the wretched creature. This obtained for me a severe beating from my husband, who then left me; and I have never seen him since."

"I tell you, Jeanne, that there are men condemned to ten years punishment and imprisonment who have not done so much to deserve it as your husband has done."

"Still he had not a bad heart. It was his frequenting alehouses, and the bad companions he met there who made him the lost creature he is."

"True, he would not hurt a child; but to a grown-up person he was not so very particular."

"Alas! it is no use repining; we must take life as we find it. Well, when my husband had left me I seemed to regain my courage, for I had no longer the constant dread of being crippled by him, and so prevented from earning bread for my children. For want of money to buy a mattrass (for one must live and pay one's rent before thinking of other things), and poor Catherine (my eldest girl) working with me fifteen hours a-day, we could scarcely earn twenty-pence a-day both together, and my other two children were too young to be able to earn any thing; so, as I was saying, for want of a mattrass we slept upon straw we picked up from time to time before the door of a large furniture-packer in the neighbourhood."

"And to think that I have spent and squandered all my money as I have done!"

"Pray do not reproach yourself. How could you possibly imagine I was in want or difficulties when I never said a word to lead you to conclude so? So poor dear Catherine and I set to work again with redoubled courage and determination. If you only knew what a dear, good child she is, so honest, industrious, and good, watching me with her

eyes to try and find out what I wish her to do! Never has a murmur escaped her lips; and yet she has seen much want and misery, though scarcely fifteen years of age! She has consoled me in the midst of my severest troubles. Oh, brother," added Jeanne, drying her eyes, "such a child is enough to repay one for the severest trials!"

"You were just such another yourself at her age; and it is but fair you should have some consolation amidst your troubles!"

"Believe me, 'tis rather on her account than mine I grieve; for it really seems out of nature to see a young creature like her slaving herself to death. For months together she has never quitted her work, except once a-week, when she goes to wash the trifle of linen we possess in the river, near the Pont-au-Charge, where they only charge three sous an hour for the use of the boats, beaters, &c. All the rest of her time she is working like a galley-slave. Ah, she has known misfortune too early! I know well that troubles must come; but then a poor girl should be able to look back upon a happy childhood at least! And another thing that grieves and vexes me almost as much as that, is not being able to render you any assistance. Still I will endeavour."

"Nonsense; don't talk so! Do you suppose I would accept of any thing from you? On the contrary, I'll tell you what *I'll* do to help you. From this time forwards I'll insist upon being paid for my amusing tales and wonderful recitals; and those who object to pay from one to two sous for hearing, shall no more be treated to the entertaining histories of Pique-Vinaigre. I shall soon collect a pretty little sum for you, I know. But why don't you take furnished lodgings, so that your husband could not molest you by selling your little possessions?"

"Furnished lodgings! Only consider, there are four, and for such a number we should have to pay at least twenty sous (tenpence) a-day. What should we have to live upon if we paid all that for rent? And now we give but fifty francs a-year for the rooms we occupy."

"True, my girl," replied Pique-Vinaigre, with bitter irony. "That's right — work, slave, begrudge yourself necessary rest or food, in order to refurnish your place. And directly you have once more got things comfortably about you, your husband will come and strip you of every thing; and when he has deprived you almost of the garments you wear, he will take your dear Catherine from you and sell her also."

"No, no, brother; he should take my life ere I would suffer him to injure my good, my virtuous child."

"Oh, but he does not wish to do her any bodily harm; he only wants to sell her. And then, remember, as the lawyer said, he is master until you can find five hundred francs to be legally separated from him. So, as that is not the case, at present you must make up your mind to submit to what cannot be helped. It seems that, by law, your husband has a right to take his child from you and send her where he pleases. And if he and his mistress are bent upon the ruin of the poor girl, doubtless they will stop at nothing to achieve it."

"Merciful God!" exclaimed the almost frantic mother; "surely such wickedness can never be tolerated in a Christian land! Justice itself would interpose if a father could insist upon selling his daughter's honour."

"Justice!" repeated Pique-Vinaigre, with a sardonic laugh, "justice! No, no, that meat is too dear for poor folks like you and I. Only, do you see, if it refers to sending a parcel of poor wretches to prison or the galleys, then it is quite a different affair; and they have justice without its costing them any thing — nay, it becomes a matter of life and death. An unhappy criminal gets his head shaved off by the guillotine for nothing: not a single farthing are they or their friends, whether rich or poor, called upon to pay for this act of impartial justice. The object of it only gives

his head!—all other expenses are defrayed by a liberal and justice-loving legislature. But the justice that would protect a worthy and ill-treated mother of a family from being beaten and pillaged to support the vices of a man who seeks even to sell the honour of his innocent child—such justice as that costs five hundred francs! So, my dear Jeanne, you must do without it."

"Brother, brother," exclaimed the poor woman, bursting into tears, "you break my heart by such words as these!"

"Well, and my own heart aches even to bursting as I think of your fate and that of your children, while I recollect that I am powerless to help you. I seem always gay and merry; but don't you be deceived by appearances, Jeanne! I tell you what, I have two descriptions of gaiety, my gay gaiety and my sad gaiety. I have neither the strength or the courage to indulge in envy, hatred, or malice, like the other prisoners; I never go beyond words, more or less droll as occasion requires. My cowardice and bodily weakness would never have allowed me to be worse than I am. And nothing but the opportunity presenting itself of robbing that poor little lone house, where there was neither a cat nor a dog to frighten one, would have drawn me into the scheme that brought me here. And then, again, by chance it was a brilliant moonlight night; for if ever there was a poor devil afraid of being alone in the dark it is me."

"Ah, dear brother, I have always told you you are better than you yourself think! Well, I trust the judges will be of my opinion and deal mercifully with you."

"Mercy!—what, for me, a liberated convict? Don't reckon too much on that or you'll be disappointed. But, hang it, what care I?—here or elsewhere is all the same to me! Let my judges do as they will with me, I shall bear them no ill-will. For you are right: I am not a bad sort of fellow at heart; and those who are worse than myself I hate with all the hatred of a good man, and shew my dislike by raillery of every sort. You can imagine—can you not—that, by dint of relating stories in which to please my auditors, I always make those who wantonly torment others receive the reward of their wickedness in the end, I get into the habit of feeling all the indignation and virtuous desire for vengeance I relate?"

"I should never have thought such persons as your prison-companions would have been interested in such recitals!"

"Oh, but I'm awake to how to tickle their fancies. If I were to relate to them the story of a man who committed no end of crimes, robbery and murder being among the mildest, and got scragged at last, they would get into a downright passion and not allow me to go on; but if I make up a tale of a woman or child, or a poor, cowardly fellow like myself, that a breath of wind would knock over, being pursued by an atrocious persecutor—a sort of Blackbeard, who torments them to death, for the pure pleasure of the thing! Oh, how they roar and stamp for joy when I make Mr. Blackbeard in the end served out as he deserves. I have got a story they have never yet heard, called *Gringalet and Cut in Half*, which used to delight all the folks at Melun. I have promised to tell it to them here to-night. But, before I begin, I shall see that they come down pretty handsome when I send the box round collecting; and you may depend

upon being all the better for its contents. And, besides that, I will write out the story itself to amuse your children, Poor dears! how pleased they will be with it! *Gringalet and Cut in Half*—there's a title for you! And, bless you, it is so virtuous and moral that an abbé might read it from his pulpit! So make yourself quite happy in every respect."

"One thing gives me great pleasure, dear brother, and that is to see that your disposition keeps you from being as unhappy as the rest of your companions here."

"Why, I am quite sure if I were like a poor fellow who is a prisoner in our ward, I should be tempted to lay violent hands on myself. Poor young man! I really am sorry for him—he seems so very wretched; and I am seriously afraid that before the day is over he will have sustained some serious mischief at the hands of the other prisoners, whom he refuses to associate with, and they owe him a grudge for it; and I know that a plan is arranged to serve him out this very evening."

"Dear me—how shocking! But you, brother, do not mean to take any part in it, I hope?"

"No, thank you, I am not such a fool; I should be sure to catch some of the good things intended for another. All I know about it I picked up while going to and fro. I heard them talking among themselves of gagging him to hinder him from crying out, and in order to prevent any one from seeing what was going on they mean to form a circle round him, making believe to be listening to one of their party, who should pretend to be reading a newspaper or any thing they liked out loud."

"But why should they thus ill-treat the poor man?"

"Because, as he is always alone, never speaks to any person, and seems to hold every body in disgust, they have taken it into their heads he s a spy, which is immensely stupid on their parts, because a spy would naturally hook on with them the better to find out all they said and did;

but I believe that the principal cause of their spite against him is that he has the air of a *gentleman*, which is a thing they hold in abhorrence. It is the captain of the dormitory, who is known by the name of the Walking Skeleton, who is at the head of this plot; and he is like a wild beast after this Germain, for so the object of their dislike is called. But let them all do as they like; it is no affair of mine. I can be of no use, therefore let them go their own way. But then you see, Jeanne, it is of no use being dull and mopish in prison, or the others are sure to suspect you of something or other. They never had to find fault with my want of sociability, and for that reason never suspected me or owed me a grudge. But come, my girl, you had better return home; we have gossipped long enough. I know very well how it takes up your time to come hither. I have nothing to do but to idle away my days: it is very different with you; so good-night. Come and see me again when you can; you know how happy it always makes me."

"Nay, but, brother, pray do not go yet; I wish you to stay."

"Nonsense, Jeanne; your children are wanting you at home. I say—I hope you have not told the poor, dear, little innocent things that their '*nunky*' is in prison?"

"No, indeed, I have not; the children believe you are abroad, and as such I can always talk to them of you."

"That's all right. Now then, be off, and get back to your family and your employment as fast as you can."

"But listen to me, brother—my poor Fortuné. I have not much to give, God knows! but still I cannot bear to see you in so deplorable a plight as you are at present: your feet must be half frozen without any stockings; and that wretched old waistcoat you have on makes my heart ache to see it. Catherine and I together will manage to get a few things together for you. You know, Fortuné, that at least we do not want for good will to—to——"

"To what—to give me better clothes? Lord love you, I've got boxes full of every thing you can mention, and directly they come I shall be able to dress like a prince! There, now; come, give me one little smile—there's a good girl! You won't? Well, then, you shall make me and bring me what you like; only remember, directly the tale of *Gringalet and Cut in Half* has replenished my money-box, I am to return all you expend upon me. And now once more, dear Jeanne, fare you well! And the next time you come to see me, may I lose the name of Pique-Vinaigre if I don't make you laugh! But be off now; cut your stick, there's a good girl! I know I have kept you too long already."

"No, no, dear brother, indeed you have not. Pray hear what I have to say!"

"Hallo, here! I say, my fine fellow," cried Pique-Vinaigre to the turnkey, who was waiting in the lobby, "I have said my say, and I want to go in again. I've talked till I'm tired."

"Oh, Fortuné," cried Jeanne, "how cruel you are to send me thus from you!"

"No, no; on the contrary, I am kinder than you give me credit for."

"Good-bye—keep up your spirits; and to-morrow morning tell the children you have been dreaming of their uncle who is abroad, and that

he desired you to give his kind love to them. There — good-bye — good-bye!"

"Good-bye, Fortuné!" replied the poor woman, bursting into tears, as her brother entered the interior of the prison.

From the moment when the bailiff seated himself between her and Jeanne, Rigolette had been unable to overhear a word more of the conversation between Pique-Vinaigre and his sister; but she continued to gaze intently on the latter, her thoughts busied with devising some plausible pretext for obtaining the poor woman's address, for the purpose of recommending her as a fit object for Rodolph's benevolence. As Jeanne rose from his seat to quit the place, Rigolette timidly approached her, and said in a kind voice,—

"Pray excuse my addressing you, but a little while ago I could not avoid overhearing your conversation, and by that I found that you were a maker of fringe and fancy trimmings."

"You heard rightly," replied Jeanne, somewhat surprised, but, at the same time, much prepossessed in favour of the open, frank expression of Rigolette's charming countenance, as well as won to confidence by her kind and friendly manner.

"And I," continued Rigolette, "am a dressmaker. And just now that fringes and gimps are so much worn, I am frequently requested by my customers to get a particular sort for them; so it occurred to me that perhaps you who make at home could supply me with what I required cheaper than the shops, while, on the other hand, you might obtain a better price from me than you get from the warehouse you work for."

"Certainly, I should make a small profit by buying the silk myself, and then making it up to order. You are very kind to have made me the proposal; but I own I feel unable to account for your being so well acquainted with my manner of gaining a living."

"Oh, I will soon explain all that to you. You must know I am waiting to see the person I came here to visit. Being quite alone, I could not help hearing all you said to your brother — of your many trials, also of your dear children. So then, thinks I to myself, poor people should always be ready to assist each other. I hope you believe that I did not try to listen? And after that gentleman came and placed himself between us, I lost all that passed between your brother and yourself. So I tried to hit upon some way of being useful to you, and then it struck me that you being a fancy trimming-maker, I might be able to put work in your way more profitable than working for shops — they pay so very little. So, if you are agreeable, we will take each other's address. This is where I live; now please to tell me where to send to you directly I have any work for you."

With these words Rigolette presented one of her businesslike cards to the sister of Pique-Vinaigre, who, deeply touched by the words and conduct of the grisette, exclaimed with much feeling,—

"Your face does not belie your kind heart; and pray do not set it down for vanity if I say that there is something about you that reminds me so forcibly of my eldest daughter, that when you first came in I could not help looking at you several times. I am very much obliged to you;

and should you give me any work, you may rely on my doing it in my best possible manner. My name is Jeanne Duport, and I live at No. 1 Rue de la Barillerie—No. 1, that is not a difficult number to recollect."

"Thank you, madame."

"Nay, 'tis rather for me to express thanks for having had the goodness even to think of serving a stranger like myself. But still I cannot help saying it does surprise me to be taken notice of by a young person like you, who most likely has never known what trouble was."

"But, my dear Madame Duport," cried Rigolette, with a winning

smile, "there is really nothing so astonishing in the affair. Since you fancy I bear some resemblance to your daughter Catherine, why should you be surprised at my wish to do a good action?"

"What a dear, sweet creature it is!" cried Madame Duport, with unaffected warmth. "Well, thanks to you, I shall return home less sad than I expected; and perhaps we may have the pleasure of meeting here again before long, for I believe you, like me, come to this dreadful place to visit a prisoner?"

"Yes, indeed, I do," replied Rigolette, with a sigh, which seemed to proceed from the very bottom of her heart.

"Then farewell for the present; we shall very shortly meet again, I hope, Mademoiselle —— Rigolette!" said Jeanne Duport, after having referred for the necessary information to the card she held in her hand.

"Oh yes, I'm sure I trust so too. Good-bye, then, till we meet again, Madame Duport."

"Well," thought Rigolette, as she returned and reseated herself on the bench, "at least I know this poor woman's address; and I feel quite sure M. Rodolph will assist her directly he knows what trouble she is in, for he always told me whenever I heard of a case of real distress to let him know, and I am sure this is one if ever there was." And here Rigolette suddenly changed the current of her ideas by wondering when it would be her turn to ask to see Germain.

A few words as to the preceding scene. Unfortunately it must be confessed that the indignation of the unhappy brother of Jeanne Duport was quite legitimate. Yes, when he said that the law was too dear for the poor he spoke the truth. To plead before the civil tribunals incurs enormous expenses, impossible for workpeople to meet when they can scarcely subsist on the wages they earn.

* * * * * *

Ought not civil as well as criminal justice to be accessible to all? When persons are too poor to be able to invoke the benefits of any law which is eminently preservative and beneficial, ought not society at its own cost to enable them to attain it out of respect for the honour and repose of families?

But let us speak no longer of the woman who must be, for all her life, the victim of a brutal and depraved husband, and speak of Jeanne

Duport's brother. This freed prisoner leaves a den of corruption to re-enter the world; he has submitted to his punishment, payed his debt

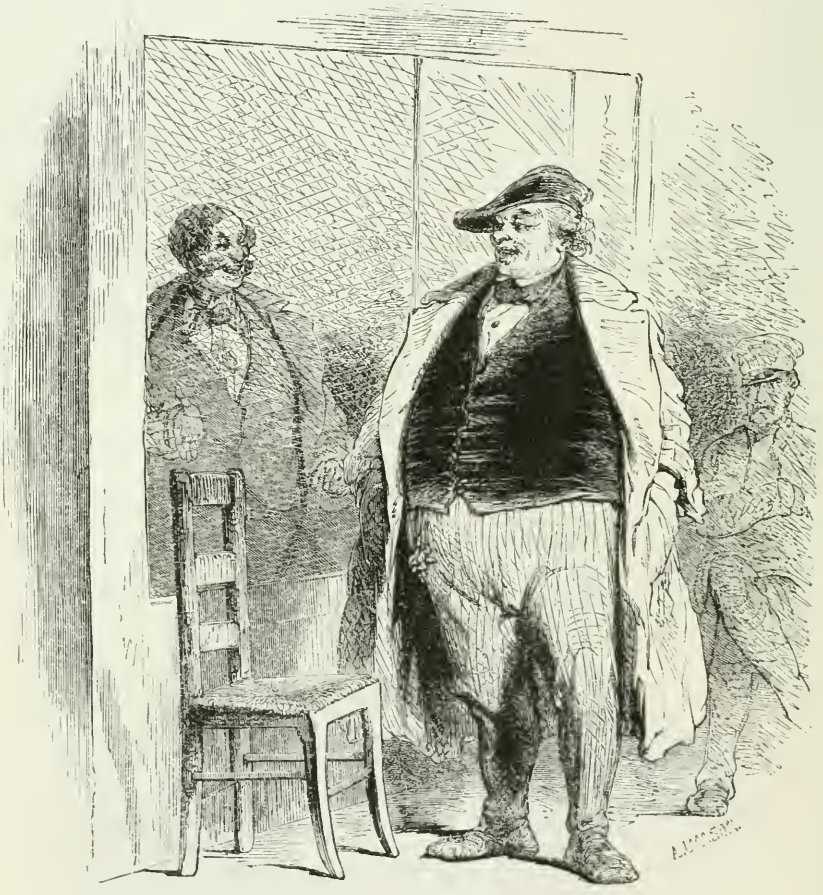
by expiation. What precaution has society taken to prevent him from falling again into crime? None! If the freed convict has the courage to resist evil temptations, he will give himself up to one of those homicidal trades of which we have spoken. Then the condition of the freed convict is much more terrible, painful, and difficult, than it was before he committed his first fault. He is surrounded by perils and rocks—he must have refusal, disdain, and often even the deepest misery. And if he relapses and commits a second crime, you are more severe towards him than for his first fault a thousand times. This is unjust, for it is always the necessity you impose on him that makes him commit the second crime. Yes, for it is demonstrated that instead of correcting, your penitentiary system depraves; instead of ameliorating, it renders worse; instead of curing slight moral defects, it renders them incurable. The severe punishment inflicted on offenders for the second time would be just and logical if your prisons, rendered moral, purified the prisoners, and if, at the termination of their punishment, good conduct was, if not easy, at least possible for them. If we are astonished at the contradictions of the law, what is it when we compare certain offences with certain crimes, either from the inevitable consequences, or from the immense disproportions which exist between the punishments awarded to each?

The conversation of the prisoner who came to see the bailiff will present one of these overwhelming contrasts.

CHAPTER XLVI.

MAITRE BOULARD.

The prisoner who entered the reception-room at the moment when Pique-Vinaigre left it, was a man about thirty, with reddish brown hair, a jovial countenance, florid and full; and his short stature made his excessive fatness still more conspicuous. This prisoner, so rosy and plump,



was attired in a long and warm dressing-gown of grey kersey, with pantaloons of the same down to his feet. A kind of cap of red velvet, called *Perinet-Leclerc*, completed this personage's costume, when we add that his feet were thrust into comfortable furred slippers. His gold chain

supported a number of handsome seals with valuable stones, and several rings with real stones shone on the red fingers of the *détenu*, who was called Maître Boulard, a *huissier* (a law-officer), and accused of *breach of trust*.

The person who had come to see him was, as we have said, Pierre Bourdin, one of the *gardes de commerce* (bailiffs) employed to arrest poor Morel the lapidary. This bailiff was usually employed by Maître Boulard, the huissier of M. Petit-Jean, the man of straw of Jacques Ferrand.

Bourdin, shorter and quite as stout as the huissier, formed himself on the model of his employer, whose magnificence he greatly admired. Very fond as he was of jewellery, he wore on this occasion a superb topaz pin, and a long gilt chain was visible through the button-holes of his waistcoat.

"Good day, my faithful friend Bourdin, I was sure you would not fail to come at my summons!" said Maître Boulard, in a joyful tone, and in a small, shrill voice, which contrasted singularly with his large carcass and full-moon face.

"Fail at your summons!" replied the bailiff; "I am incapable of such behaviour, *mon général*."

This was the appellation by which Bourdin, with a joke at once familiar and respectful, called the huissier, under whose orders he acted; this military appellation being very frequently used amongst certain classes of clerks and civil practitioners.

"I observe with pleasure that friendship remains faithful to misfortune!" said Maître Boulard, with gay cordiality. "However, I was getting a little uneasy, as three days had elapsed and no Bourdin."

"Only imagine, *mon général!*—it is really quite a history. You remember that dashing vicomte in the Rue de Chaillot?"

"Saint-Rémy?"

"Yes; you know how he laughed at all our attempts to 'nab' him?"

"Yes; he behaved very ill in that way."

"Well, this vicomte has got another title."

"What, is he a comte?"

"No, but from swindler he has become thief!"

"Ah, bah!"

"They are after him for some diamonds he has stolen; and, by the way, they belonged to the jeweller who used to employ that vermin of a Morel, the lapidary we were going to arrest in the Rue du Temple, when a tall, thin chap, with black moustaches, paid for this half-starved devil, and very nearly pitched me and Malicorne headlong downstairs."

"Ah, yes, yes, I remember; you told me all about it, Bourdin—it was really very droll! But as to this dashing vicomte?"

"Why, as I tell you, Saint-Rémy was charged with robbery, after having made his worthy old father believe that he wished to blow out his brains. A police-agent of my acquaintance, knowing that I had been long on the traces of the vicomte, asked me if I could not give him information so that he could 'grab' the dandy. I had learned (too late for myself) that he had 'run to earth' in a farm at Arnouville, five leagues from Paris; but when we got there the bird had flown!"

"But next day he paid that acceptance—thanks, as I have heard say, to some rich woman!"

"Yes, general; but still I knew the nest, and he might have gone there again, and so I told my friend in the police. He proposed to me to give him a friendly cast of my office and shew him the farm, and as I had nothing to do and it was a rural trip, I agreed."

"Well, and the vicomte?"

"Not to be found. After having lurked about the farm for some

time, we gained admittance, and returned as wise as we went; and this is why I could not come to your orders sooner, general."

"I was sure it was something of this sort, my good fellow."

"But if I may be allowed to ask how the devil did you get here."

"Wretches, my dear fellow, a set of wretches who, for a miserable sixty thousand francs of which they declare I have wronged them, have charged me with a breach of trust and compelled me to resign my office."

"Really, general!—well, that's unfortunate! And shall I then work for you no longer?"

"I am on half-pay now, Bourdin—on the retired list."

"But who are these vindictive persons?"

"Why, only imagine, one of the most savage of all is a liberated convict, who employed me to recover the amount of a bill of seven hundred miserable francs, for which it was requisite to bring an action. Well, I brought the action, and got the money and used it; and because, in consequence of some unsuccessful speculations, I swamped that money and several other sums, all these blackguards have assailed me with warrants; and so you find me here, my dear fellow, neither more nor less than a malefactor."

"And does it not alarm you, general?"

"Yes; but the oddest thing of all is that this convict wrote me word some days ago that this money being his sole resource for bad times, and these bad times having arrived (I don't know what he means by that), I was responsible for the crimes he might commit in order to escape from starvation."

"Amusing, 'pon my soul!"

"Very; and the fellow is capable of saying this, but fortunately the law does not recognise any such accompliceships."

"After all you are only charged with breach of trust?"

"That is all. Do you take me for a thief, Maître Bourdin?"

"Oh, dear general! I meant to say there was nothing very serious in this."

"Why, I don't look very *down*, do I, my boy?"

"By no means; never saw you looking better. Indeed, if you are found guilty, you will only have two or three months imprisonment and twenty-five francs fine. I know the law, you see!"

"And these two or three months I shall contrive, I know, to pass quietly in some infirmary. I have a deputy at my elbow."

"Oh, then, you're all right."

"Yes, Bourdin; and I can scarcely help laughing to think what little good the fools who put me here have done themselves—they will not recover a sou of the money they claim. They compel me to sell my post—what do I care?"

"True, general; it is only so much the worse for them."

"Yes, my boy. And now for the subject on which I was anxious to see you, Bourdin; it is a very delicate affair—there is a lady in the case!" said Maître Boulard, with mysterious self-complacency.

"Oh, you gay deceiver! But, be it what it may, you may rely on me."

"I am greatly interested in the welfare of a young actress at the theatre of the Folies-Dramatiques. I pay her rent; but, you know, the absent are always in the *wrong!* Alexandrine has applied to me for money. Now I have never been a very gay fellow, but yet I do not like to be made a fool of; so, before I comply, I should like to know if the lady is faithful. I know there is nothing more absurd and uncommon than fidelity, and so you will do me a friendly service if you could just watch her for a few days and let me know your opinion, either by a talk with the porter at her abode or——"

"I understand, general," said Bourdin; "this is no worse than watch-

ing a debtor. Rely on me; I will have an eye to Mademoiselle Alexandrine—although, I should say, you are too generous and too good-looking not to be adored!"

Mademoiselle Alexandrine.

"My good looks are no use, my friend, so long as I am absent; and so I rely on you to discover the truth."

"Rely on me."

"How can I, my dear fellow, prove my gratitude?"

"Don't mention it, general."

"Pray understand, my dear Bourdin, that your fees in this case will be the same as if you were after an arrest."

"I can't allow it, general. As long as I act under your orders, have you not allowed me to shear the debtor to his very skin—to double, treble, the costs of arrest? and have you not sued for those costs for me as eagerly as if they were due to yourself?"

"But, my dear fellow, this is very different; and, in my turn, I declare I will not allow it."

"*Mon général*, you will really make me quite ashamed if you do not allow me to make these inquiries as to Mademoiselle Alexandrine as a poor proof of my gratitude."

"Well, well; be it so. I will no longer contend with your generosity; and your devotion will be a sweet reward to me for considerations I have always mixed up in our transactions."

"Very good, general; and now we understand each other. Is there any thing else I can do for you? You must be very uncomfortable here. I hope you are *à la pistole* (in a private room)?"

"Yes; I came just in time to get the only empty room—the others are being repaired. I have made myself as comfortable as possible in my cell, and am not so very miserable. I have a stove and a very nice easy chair; I make three long meals a-day, and my digestion is good; then I walk and go to sleep. Except my uneasiness about Alexandrine I have not so much to complain of."

"But for you who were such an epicure, general, the prison diet is very poor."

"Why, there is an excellent cookshop in my street, and I have a running account with him, and so every two days he sends me a very nice supply. And, by the way, I would get you to ask his wife—a nice little woman is Madame Michonneau—to put into the basket a bit of pickled thunny. It is in season now, and relishes one's wine."

"Capital idea!"

"And tell Madame Michonneau to send me a basket of various wines

—burgundy, champagne, and bordeaux—like the last; she'll know what I mean. And tell her to put in two bottles of old cognac of 1817, and a pound of pure Mocha, fresh roasted and ground."

"I'll put down the date of the cognac, lest I should forget it," said Bourdin, taking a memorandum-book from his pocket.

"As you are writing, my good fellow, be so good as make a minute of my wish to have an eider-down quilt from my house."

"All shall be done to the letter, general; make your mind easy. And now I shall be comfortable about your living. But your walks: you are compelled to take them along with those ruffians confined here?"

"Yes; and it's really very lively and animated. I go down after breakfast; sometimes I go into one yard, sometimes another, and I mix with the mob. Really they appear very good sort of fellows! Some of them are very amusing. The most ferocious are collected in what is called the Fosse aux Lions. Ah, my good fellow, what hang-dog-looking fellows there are amongst them. There's one they call the Skeleton—I never saw such a creature."

"What a singular name!"

"He is so thin, or rather bare of flesh, that this is the nickname which has been given to him; he is really frightful. He is, besides, director of his ward, and, moreover, an infernal villain. He has just left the galleys, and went directly to murder and assassination. But his last murder was really horrible, as he knew he should be condemned to death without chance of remission; but he laughs at it."

"What a scoundrel!"

"All the prisoners admire and tremble before him. I got into his good graces at once by offering him some cigars, and so he made a friend of me at once, and offered to teach me slang; and I have made considerable progress."

"Oh, what an idea!—my general learning slang!"

"I amuse myself as much as I can, and all these fellows adore me. I am not proud like a young fellow they call Germain, who gives himself the airs of a lord."

"But he must be delighted at meeting with such a gentleman as you, even if he is disgusted with the others."

"Why, really, he did not seem even to notice that I was there; but, if he had, I should have taken care how I took any notice of him. He is the *bête noire* of the whole prison, and some day or other they'll play him a slippery trick; and, *pardieu!* I have no wish to come in for my share of what may befall him."

"You're right."

"It would interfere with my pleasures, for my walk with the prisoners is really a pleasure to me; only these ruffians have no great opinion of me *morally*. You see, my accusation of a simple breach of trust is contemptible in the eyes of these out-and-outers; and they look on me as a nobody."

"Why, really, with such criminals you are——"

"A mere chicken, my dear fellow. But do not forget my commissions."

"Make your mind easy, general. 1st, Mademoiselle Alexandrine; 2d, the fish-pie and basket of wine; 3d, the old cognac of 1817, the

ground coffee, and the eider-down quilt: you shall have it all. Is there any thing else?"

"Yes, I forgot. You know the address of M. Badinot?"

"The agent?—yes.

"Well, be so kind as call on him, and say that I rely on his friendship to find me a barrister such as my case requires, and that I shall not stand for forty or fifty pounds."

"I'll see M. Badinot, depend upon it, general; and all your commissions shall be attended to this evening, and to-morrow you shall receive all you wish for. So good day, and a happy meeting to us soon, *mon général*."

"Good-by, my worthy friend!" And the prisoner quitted the parlour at one door, and the visitor by the other."

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Let us now compare the crime of Pique-Vinaigre with that of M. Boulard, the huissier. Compare the beginning of the two, and the reasons, the necessities, which impelled them to evil. Compare, too, the punishment which awaited them respectively. The one, driven by his hunger and need, robs. He is apprehended, judged, and sentenced to

fifteen or twenty years of hard labour and exposure. Property is sacred, and he who, in the night, breaks for plunder should undergo sacred punishment. But ought not the well-informed, intelligent, rich man

who robs — not to satisfy hunger, but his caprices or gambling in the stocks — to be punished? Yet for the public spoliator there is two months' imprisonment; for the relapsed convict twenty years' hard labour and exposure. What can we add to these facts, which speak for themselves?

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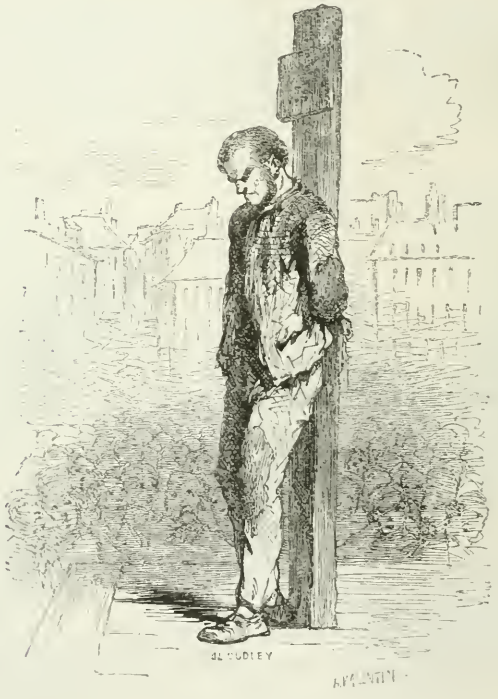
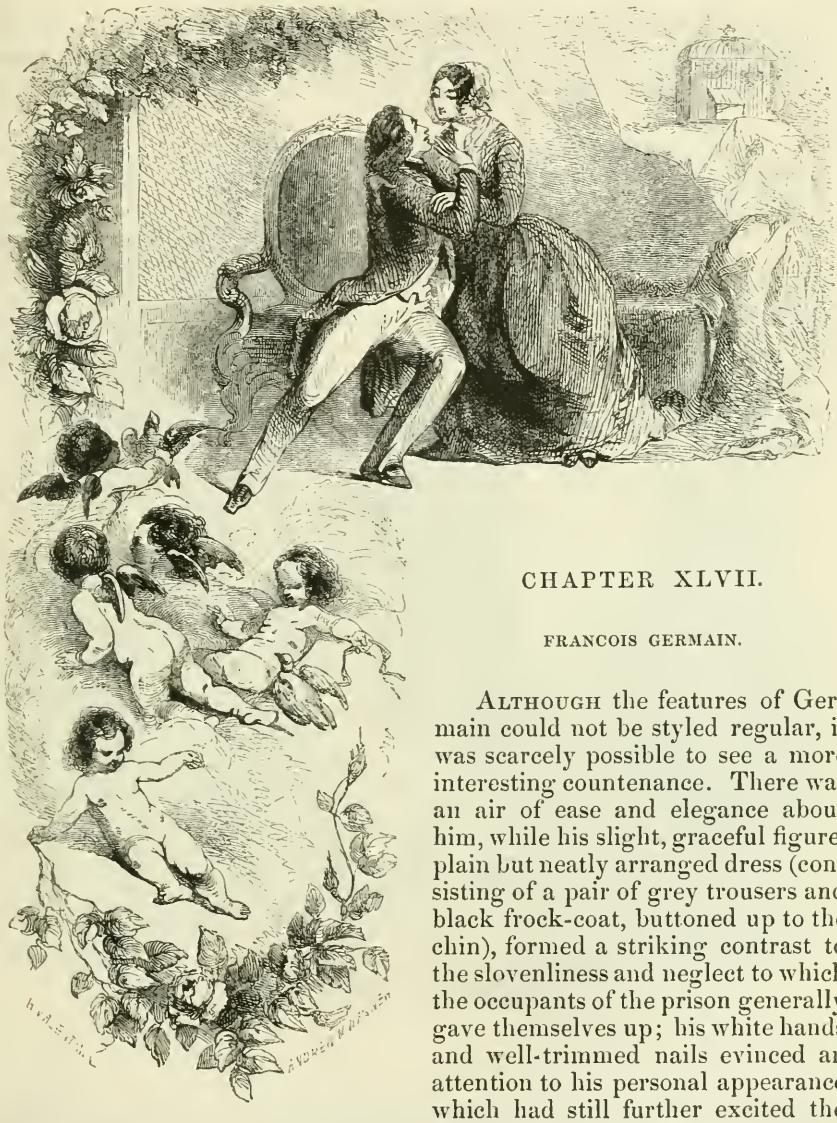
The old turnkey kept his word; and, when Boulard left the parlour, Germain entered, and Rigolette was only separated from him by a light wire grating.





CHAPTER XLVII.

FRANCOIS GERMAIN.

Although the features of Germain could not be styled regular, it was scarcely possible to see a more interesting countenance. There was an air of ease and elegance about him, while his slight, graceful figure, plain but neatly arranged dress (consisting of a pair of grey trousers and black frock-coat, buttoned up to the chin), formed a striking contrast to the slovenliness and neglect to which the occupants of the prison generally gave themselves up; his white hands and well-trimmed nails evinced an attention to his personal appearance which had still further excited the ill-will of the prisoners against him, for bodily neglect is almost invariably the accompaniment of moral perversion. He wore his long and naturally curling chestnut hair parted on one side of his forehead, according to the fashion of the day, a style that well became his pale and melancholy countenance and large, clear blue eyes, beaming with truth and candour; his smile, at once sweet and mournful, expressed benevolence of heart mingled with an habitual dejection, for, though young, the unfortunate youth had already deeply tasted affliction. Nothing could be imagined more touching than the look of suffering impressed on his features, while

the gentle and resigned cast of his whole physiognomy was but a fair transcript of the mind within, for a better, purer, or more upright heart could scarcely have beaten in human form.

The very cause of his imprisonment (divested of the calumnious aggravations affixed to it by Jacques Ferraud) proved the goodness of his nature, and left him worthy of blame only for suffering himself to be led astray by his feelings to commit an action decidedly wrong, but still excusable if it be remembered that the son of Madame Georges felt perfectly sure of replacing on the following morning the sum temporarily taken from the notary's cash-box, for the purpose of saving Morel the lapidary from being dragged from his family and confined in a prison. Germain coloured slightly as he perceived, through the grating of the visitor's room, the bright and charming countenance of Rigolette, who strove, as usual, to

appear gay, in hopes of encouraging and enlivening her *protégé* a little; but the poor girl was too bad a dissembler to conceal the sorrow and agitation she invariably experienced upon entering the prison. She was seated on a bench at the outside of the grating, holding her straw basket on her lap.

Instead of remaining in the adjoining passage, from whence every word could be heard, the old turnkey retired to the stove placed at the very extremity of the visiting-room, closed his eyes, and, in a very few seconds, was (as his breathing announced) fast asleep, leaving Germain and Rigolette at perfect liberty to converse at their ease.

"Now then, Monsieur Germain," cried the grisette, placing her pretty face as closely as she could to the grate, the better to examine the features of her friend, "let me see what sort of a countenance you have got to-day, and whether it is less sad than it was? Humph, humph—only middling! Now, do you know that I've a great mind to be very angry with you?"

"Oh no, you are too good for that. But how very kind of you to come again so soon!"

"So soon!—does it seem to you *so soon?* You mean by those words to reproach me for coming so frequently. Well——"

"Have I not good cause to find fault with you for taking so much pains and trouble for *me*, while *I*, alas! can merely thank you for all your goodness?"

"That is a little mistake of yours, my fussy friend, because the little services in my power to render you afford me quite as much pleasure as they do *you;* so that, you see, I am as much bound to say 'Thank you for all favours,' as you are. So, you see, I am not to be cheated that way. And now I think of it, the best way to punish you for such very improper ideas will be not to give you what I have brought for you."

"What! another proof of your thoughtful care of me? Oh, you spoil me—you do, indeed! I shall be fit for nothing but to be somebody's pet when (if ever, alas!) I get out of prison. A thousand thanks! Nay, you must pardon my using that word, although it does displease you. But, indeed, you leave me nothing else to say."

"Ah, but don't be in such a hurry to thank me, before you even know what I have brought!"

"Why, what do I care what it is?"

"Well, I'm sure, that's very civil, M. Germain!"

"Nay, I only meant to say that, be it what it may, it must needs be dear and precious to me, since it comes from you. Oh, Mademoiselle Rigolette, your unwearied kindness, your touching sympathy, fills me with the deepest gratitude, and—and——" But finding it impossible to conclude the sentence, Germain cast down his eyes and remained silent.

"Well," said Rigolette, "and what else?"

"And—devotion!" stammered out Germain.

"Why could you not have said 'respect,' as people write at the end of a letter?" asked Rigolette, impatiently. "Ah, but I know very well that was not what you were going to say, else why did you stop all of a sudden?"

"I assure you——"

"There, don't endeavour to assure me of any thing; I can see you are

blushing through this grating. Now why can't you speak out, and tell me every thought and wish of your heart? Am I not your true and faithful friend as well as old companion?" continued the grisette timidly, for she but waited the confession of Germain's love for her to tell him frankly and sincerely how truly she returned his affection with a passion as true and as generous as his own.

"I assure you, Mademoiselle Rigolette," said the poor prisoner with a sigh, "that I had nothing else to say, and that I am concealing nothing whatever from you."

"For shame—for shame!" cried Rigolette, stamping her foot; "don't tell such stories. Now, look here," continued she, drawing a large white woollen neck wrapper from her basket; "do you see this beautiful thing? Well, I brought it on purpose for you. But now—to punish you for being so deceitful and sly—I will not give it to you. I knitted it on purpose for you, too; for, said I, it must be so damp and cold in those yards in the prison. And this nice, soft woollen handkerchief, is just the thing to keep him warm: he is so delicate!"

"And is it possible you——"

"Yes, sir, I said you were delicate—and so you are," cried Rigolette,

interrupting him. "I suppose I may recollect, if I please, how chilly you used to be of an evening, though all the time you tried to conceal it, that you might hinder me from putting more wood on my fire when you came to sit with me. I've got a good memory, I can tell you; so don't contradict me."

"And so have I," replied Germain, in a voice of deep feeling—"far too good for my present position;" and, with these words, he passed his hand across his eyes.

"Now then, I declare I believe you are falling into low spirits again, though I so strictly forbade it."

"How is it possible for me to avoid being moved even to tears, when I recollect all you have done for me ever since I entered this prison? And is not your last kind attention another proof of your amiable care for me? And do I not know that you are obliged to work at night to make up for the time it occupies for you to visit me in my misfortunes, and that, on my account, you impose additional labour and fatigue on yourself?"

"Oh, if that be all you have to be miserable about I beg you will make very short work of it. Truly, I deserve a great deal of pity for taking a nice refreshing walk two or three times a-week just to see a friend—I who so dearly love walking—and having a good stare at all the pretty shops as I come along."

"And see, to-day, too, what weather you have ventured out in! such wind and rain! Oh, it is too selfish of me to permit you thus to sacrifice your health for me!"

"Oh, bless you, the wind and rain only make the walk more amusing. You have no idea what very droll sights one sees; first comes a party of men, holding on their hats with both hands, to prevent the storm from carrying them away; then you see an unfortunate individual with his umbrella blown inside out, making the most ludicrous grimaces, and shutting his eyes while the wind drives him about like a peg-top. I declare all the way I came along this morning it was more diverting than going to a play. I thought I should make you laugh by telling you of it; but there you are looking more dull, and solid, and serious, than ever!"

"Pray forgive me if I cannot be as mirthful as your kind heart would have me: you know I never have what is styled high spirits, and just now I feel it impossible even to affect them."

Rigolette was very desirous of concealing that, spite of her lively prattle, she was to the full as sad and heavy-hearted as Germain himself could be, she, therefore, hastened to change the conversation by saying,—

"You say it is impossible for you to conquer your low spirits, but there are other things you choose to style impossibilities I have begged and prayed of you to do, because I very well know you could, if you chose."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean your obstinate avoidance of all the other prisoners, and never speaking to one of them; the turnkey has just been talking to me about it, and he says that for your own sake you ought to associate with them a little. I am sure it would not do you any harm: you do not speak; it is always the way. I see very well you will never be satisfied till these dreadful men have played you some dangerous trick in revenge."

"You know not the horror with which they inspire me, any more than

you can guess the personal reasons I have for avoiding and execrating them, and all who resemble them."

"Indeed, but I do know your reasons! I read the accounts you wrote for me, and which I went to fetch away from your lodgings after your imprisonment; from them I learned all the dangers you had incurred upon your arrival in Paris, because, when you were in the country, you refused to participate in the crimes of the bad man who had brought you up; and that it was in consequence of the last snare they laid to catch you that you quitted the Rue du Temple, without telling any one but me where you had gone to. And I read something else, too, in those papers," said Rigolette, casting down her eyes, while a bright blush dyed her cheeks; "I read things that—that——"

"You would never have known, I solemnly declare," exclaimed Germain, eagerly, "had it not been for the misfortune which befell me. But let me ask you to be as generous as you are good; forget and pardon my past follies, my insane hopes. 'Tis true, in times past I ventured to indulge such dreams, wild and unfounded as they were."

Rigolette had endeavoured a second time to draw a confession of his love from the lips of Germain by alluding to those tender and passionate effusions written by him and dedicated to the remembrance of the grisette, for whom, as we have before stated, he had always felt the sincerest affection; but, the better to preserve the confiding familiarity with which he was treated by his pretty neighbour, he concealed his regard under the semblance of friendship. Rendered more timid and sensitive by imprisonment, he could not for an instant believe it possible for Rigolette to reciprocate the attachment of a poor prisoner like himself, whose character was, moreover, tarnished by so foul an accusation as he laboured under, while previous to this calamity she had never manifested more than a sisterly interest in him. The grisette, finding herself so little understood, stifled a sigh, and awaited with hopeful eagerness a better opportunity of opening the eyes of Germain to the real state of her heart. She contented herself, therefore, with merely replying,—

"To be sure, it is quite natural the sight of these wicked men should fill you with horror and disgust; but that is no reason for your exposing yourself to unnecessary dangers."

"I assure you that, in order to follow your advice, I have endeavoured to force myself to converse with such as seemed the least depraved among them; but you can form no notion what dreadful men they are, or what shocking language they talk."

"I dare say they do, poor unfortunate creatures! it must be horrid to hear them."

"But there is something more terrible than that, the getting gradually used to the disgusting conversations which, in spite of yourself, you are compelled to hear all day long. Yes, I am sorry to say, I now hear with gloomy indifference horrible remarks and speeches that would have excited my utmost indignation when I first came here. So, you see," continued Germain, bitterly, "I begin to be more afraid of myself than I am of them."

"Oh, M. Germain!"

"I am sure of it," pursued the unfortunate young man. "After a residence within a prison in company with such as are always to be found

assembled there, the mind becomes accustomed to guilty thoughts, in the same manner as the ear gets inured to the coarse and vulgar expressions continually in use. Oh, God, I can well believe how possible it is to enter these walls innocent of the crimes ascribed to one, and to leave them with principles utterly and irretrievably perverted!"

"But you never could be so changed! oh, no, not you!"

"Ay, me! and others twenty times better than myself. Alas! alas! those who condemn men to this fearful association little think that they expose their fellow-creatures to breathe an air laden with the direst moral contagion, and inevitably fatal to every right or honourable feeling!"

"Pray do not go on so! you know not how you grieve me!"

"Nay, I but wished to explain to you why I am daily more and more melancholy. I wished not to have said so much, but I have only one way of repaying the pity you have evinced for me."

"Pity?—pity? indeed——

"Pardon me for interrupting you, but the only way by which I can acquit myself towards you is to speak with perfect candour; and, with shuddering alarm, I confess that I am no longer the same person I was. In vain do I fly these unfortunate wretches, their very presence, their contact seems to take effect on me; in spite of myself, I seem to feel a fatal influence in breathing the same atmosphere, as though the moral pestilence entered at every pore, and rested not till it had mingled with the heart's blood. Should I even be acquitted on my trial, the very sight of, and association with, good and virtuous men would cover me with shame and confusion; for, though I have not yet been able to find pleasure in the society of my companions, I have, at least, learned to dread the day when I shall again mix with persons of respectability, because now I am conscious of my weakness and cowardice; for is not he guilty of both who dares to make a compromise with his duties or his honesty? and have not I done so? When I first came here I did not deceive myself as to the extent of my fault, however excusable the circumstances under which it was committted might have seemed to make it; but now it appears to me an offence of a trifling description when compared with the crimes of which the robbers and murderers by whom I am surrounded make daily boast. And I sometimes surprise myself envying their audacious indifference, and blaming myself with my own weak regrets for so insignificant an action."

"And so it was an insignificant action, far more generous than wrong. Why, what did you do but borrow for a few hours a sum of money you knew you could replace on the following morning; and that, too, not for yourself, but to save a whole family from ruin, perhaps death."

"That matters not, it was a theft in the eyes of the law and all honest men. Doubtless it is better to rob with a good motive than a bad one, but it is a fearful thing to be obliged to seek an excuse for oneself by comparing one's own guilt with that of persons far beneath ourselves. I can no longer venture to compare my actions with those of upright persons, consequently, then, I am compelled to institute a comparison between myself and the degraded beings with whom I live; so that I plainly perceive in the end the conscience becomes hardened and is put to sleep. The next theft I commit, probably without the prospect of replacing the

money, but from mere cupidity, I might still find an excuse for myself by comparing my conduct with that of a man who adds murder to theft; and yet at this moment there is as great a difference between me and a murderer as there is between a person of untainted character and myself. So, because there are beings a thousand times more degraded and debased than I am, by degrees my own degradation would become diminished in my estimation; instead of being able to say, as I once could, 'I am as honest a man as any I meet with,' I shall be obliged to content myself with saying I am the least guilty of the vile wretches among whom I am condemned for ever to live."

"Oh, do not say for ever! Once released from this place——"

"What should I gain even then? The lost creatures by whom I am surrounded are perfectly well acquainted with my person, and, were I even to be set free, I am exposed to the chance of meeting them again, and being hailed as a prison associate; and even though the fact of my imprisonment might be unknown, these unprincipled beings would be for ever threatening me to divulge it, thereby holding me completely in their power, by bands too firm for me to hope to break; while, on the other hand, had I been kept confined in my cell until my trial, they would have known nothing of me, or I of them: so that I should have escaped the fears which may paralyse my best resolutions. And, besides, had I been permitted to contemplate my fault in the solitude of my cell, instead of decreasing in my eyes, its enormity would have appeared still greater; and in the same proportion would the expiation I proposed to make have been augmented; and as my sin grew more and more apparent to my unbiassed view, so also would my earnest determination to atone for it by every means my humble sphere afforded have been strengthened; for well I know it takes a *hundred* good deeds to efface the recollection of *one* bad. But how can I ever expect to turn my thoughts towards expiating a crime which scarcely awakens in me the smallest remorse? I tell you again—and I feel what I say—that I seem acting under some irresistible influence, against which I have long and fruitlessly struggled. I was brought up for evil, and, alone, friendless, and powerless to resist, I yield to my destiny. What matters it whether that destiny be accomplished by honest or dishonest means? Yet Heaven knows my thoughts and intentions were ever pure and upright; and I felt the greater satisfaction in the possession of an unsullied reputation, from recollection of all the attempts that had been made to lead me to a life of infamy; and mine has been a course of infinite difficulty while seeking to free myself from the odious wretches who wished to degrade me, and render me as vile as themselves. But what avails my having been a person of unblemished honour and unspotted reputation? What am I now? Oh, dreadful, dreadful contrast!" exclaimed the unhappy prisoner, in an agony of tears and sobs, which drew a plenteous shower of sympathising drops from the tender-hearted grisette, who, guided by her natural right-mindedness, her woman's wit, as well as warmed by her deep affection for Germain, clearly perceived that, although as yet her *protégé* had lost none of the scrupulous notions of honour and probity he had ever entertained, yet that he spoke truly when he expressed his dread that the day might come when he would behold with guilty indifference those words and actions he now

shuddered even to think of. Drying her eyes, therefore, and addressing Germain, who was still leaning his forehead against the grating, she said, in a voice and manner more touchingly serious than Germain had ever before observed,—

"Listen to me, Germain! I shall not, perhaps, be able to express myself as I could wish, for I am not a good speaker like you, but what I do say is uttered in all sincerity and truth; but first I must tell you you have no right to call yourself alone and friendless."

"Oh, think not I can ever forget all your generous compassion has induced you to do to serve me!"

"Just now, when you used the word *pity*, I did not interrupt you; but now that you repeat the word, or at least one quite as bad, I must tell you quite plainly that I feel neither *pity* nor *compassion* for you, but quite a different —— Stay, I will try and explain myself as well as I can. While we were next-door neighbours, I felt for you all the regard due to one I esteemed as a friend and brother. We mutually aided each other; you shared with me all your Sunday amusements, and I did my very best to look as well and be as gay and entertaining as I could, in order to shew how much I was gratified: so there again we were quits."

"Quits? oh, no, no! I——"

"Now, do hold *your* tongue, and let me speak! I'm sure you have had all the talk to yourself this long while. When you were obliged to quit the house we lodged in, I felt more sorrow at your departure than I had ever done before."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, indeed, for all the other persons who had lived in your apartments were careless creatures, whom I did not care a pin for; while you, from the very first of our acquaintance, seemed just the sort of person I wanted to be my neighbour, because you could understand that I wished us to be good friends, and nothing more. Then you were so ready to pass all your spare time with me, teaching me to write, giving me good advice, —a little serious to be sure, but all the better for that. You were ever kind and good, yet never presumed upon it in any way; and even when compelled to change your lodging, you confided to me a secret you would not have trusted to any one else—the name of your new abode; and that made me so proud and happy, to think you should have so much reliance on the silence and friendship of a giddy girl like myself. I used to think of you so constantly, that at last every other person seemed to be banished from my recollection, and you alone to occupy my memory. Pray don't turn away as if you did not believe me. You know I always speak the truth."

"Indeed, indeed, I can scarcely believe that you were kind enough thus to remember me."

"Oh, but I did, though; and I should have been very ungrateful had I acted otherwise. Sometimes I used to say to myself, 'M. Germain is the very nicest young man I know, though he is rather too serious at times; but never mind that. If I had a friend whom I wished to be *very*, *very* happy when she was married, I certainly should recommend her marrying M. Germain, who would make just such a husband as a good wife deserves to meet with.'"

"You remembered me then, it seems, for the sake of bestowing me on another," murmured poor Germain, almost involuntarily.

"Yes, and I should have been delighted to have helped you to obtain a good wife, because I felt a real and friendly interest in your happiness. You see I speak without any reserve; you know I never could disguise my thoughts."

"Well, I can but thank you for caring enough about me even to wish to dispose of me in marriage to one of your acquaintances."

"This was the state of things when your troubles came upon you, and you sent me that poor dear letter in which you acquainted me with what you styled your fault, but which, to an ignorant mind like my own, seemed a noble and generous action. That letter directed me to go and fetch away your papers, among which I found the confession of your love for me,—a love you had never ventured to reveal; and there, too," continued Rigolette, unable longer to restrain her tears, "I learned that, kindly considering my future prospects (illness or want of employ might render so distressing), you wished, in the event of your dying a violent death (as your fears foretold might be the case), to secure to me the trifle you had accumulated by industry and care."

"I did; and surely if, during my lifetime, you had been overtaken by sickness or any other misfortune, you would sooner have accepted assistance from me than from any other living creature, would you not? I flattered myself so, at least. Tell me, tell——I was right, that to me you would have turned for succour and support as to a true and devoted friend?"

"Of course I should! Who else should I have thought of in any hour of need or sorrow but you, M. Germain?"

"Thanks, thanks! your words fall like healing drops upon my heart, and console me for all I have suffered."

"But how shall I attempt to describe to you what I felt while reading that—oh, it is a dreadful word to utter!—that *will*, each word of which breathed only care and solicitude for my future welfare? and yet these tender, touching proofs of your sincere regard were to have been concealed from me till your death. Surely it was not strange that conduct so generous and delicate should at once have converted my feelings towards you into those of an affection sincere and fervent as your own for me. That is easily understood, is it not, M. Germain?"

The large dark eyes of Rigolette were fixed on Germain with an expression so earnest and tender, her sweet voice pronounced the simple confession of her love in a tone so touchingly true to nature, that Germain, who had never for one instant flattered himself with having awakened so warm an interest in the heart of the grisette, gazed on her for an instant in utter inability to believe the words he heard; then, as the bright beaming look he encountered conveyed the truth to his mind, his colour varied from deepest red to deadly pale, he cried out in a voice quivering with emotion,—

"Can it be? Do I hear aright? Ah! repeat those dear words that I may feel convinced of their reality."

"Why should I hesitate to assure you again and again that when I learned your kind consideration for me, and remembered how miserable and wretched you were, I no longer felt for you the calm feelings of

friendship? and certainly, M. Germain," added Rigolette, smilingly, while a rosy blush mantled her intelligent features, "if I had a friend *now* I wished to see well married, I should be very sorry indeed to recommend her choosing you, because, because——"

"You would marry me yourself!" exclaimed the delighted young man.

"You compel me to tell you so myself, since you will not ask it of me."

"Can this be possible?"

"It is not from not having put you in the direct path more than once to make you understand. But you will not take a hint, and so, sir, I am compelled to confess the thing myself. It is wrong, perhaps; but, as there is no one but yourself to reprove my boldness, I have less fear; and then," added Rigolette, in a more serious tone, and with tender emotion, "you just now appeared to me so greatly overcome, so despairing, that I could no longer repress my feelings; and I had vanity enough to believe that this avowal, frankly made and from my heart, would prevent you from being unhappy in future. I said to myself, 'Until now I had been able to amuse or comfort him——' Ah, *mon Dieu!* what is the matter?" exclaimed Rigolette, seeing Germain conceal his face in his hands. "Is not this cruel?" she added; "whatever I do, whatever I say, you are still as wretched as ever, and that is being too unkind—too selfish: it is as if it were you only who suffered from sorrows!"

"Alas! what misery is mine!" exclaimed Germain, with despair; "you love me when I am no longer worthy of you."

"Not worthy of me? Why, how can you talk so absurdly? It is just as if I said that I was not formerly worthy of your friendship because I had been in prison; for, after all, I have been a prisoner also: but am I the less an honest girl?"

"But you were in prison because you were a poor forsaken girl; whilst I—alas! what a difference!"

"Well, then, as to prison, we shall neither of us ever have any thing to reproach each other with. It is I who am the more ambitious of the two; for, in my position, I have no right to think of any person but a workman for my husband. I was a foundling, and have nothing but my small apartment and my good spirits, and yet I come and boldly offer myself to you as a wife."

"Alas! formerly such a destiny would have been the dream—the happiness of my life! But now I am under the odium of an infamous accusation; and should I take advantage of your excessive generosity—your commiseration, which no doubt misleads you? No, no!"

"But," exclaimed Rigolette, with pained impatience, "I tell you that it is not pity I feel for you, it is *love!* I think of you only; I no longer sleep or eat. Your sad and gentle countenance follows me every where. Can that be pity only? Now, when you speak to me, your voice, your look, go to my very heart. There are a thousand things in you now which please me, and which I had not before marked. I like your face, I like your eyes, your appearance, your disposition, your good heart. Is that pity? Why, after having loved you as a friend, do I love you as a lover? I cannot say. Why was I light and gay when I liked you as a friend? Why am I quite a different being now I love you as a lover? I do not know. Why have I been so slow in finding you at once hand-

some and good—in loving you at once with eyes and heart? I cannot say—or rather, yes—I can; it is because I have discovered how much you love me without having told me of it—how generous and devoted you were. Then love mounted from my heart to my eyes, as a tear does when the heart is softened."

"Really, I seem to be in a dream when I hear you speak thus!"

"And I never could have believed that I could have told you all this, but your despair has forced me to it. Well, sir, now you know I love you as my friend, my lover—as my husband! Will you still call it pity?"

The generous scruples of Germain were overcome in an instant before this plain and devoted confession, a hopeful joy prevailed over his painful reflections.

"You love me?" he cried; "I believe you; your accent, your look—every thing proclaims it! I will not ask how I have merited such happiness, but I abandon myself to it blindly; my life, my whole life, will not suffice to pay my debt to you! Oh, I have greatly suffered already, but this moment effaces all!"

"Then you will be comforted at last? Oh, I was sure I should contrive to do so!" cried Rigolette, in a transport of joy.

"And it is in the midst of the horrors of a prison, and when all conspires to overwhelm me, that such happiness——"

Germain could not conclude. This thought reminded him of the reality of his position. His scruples, for a moment lost sight of, returned more severe than ever, and he said, with despair,—

"But I am a prisoner—I am accused of robbery; I shall be sentenced—dishonoured, perhaps! And I cannot accept of your generous sacrifice—profit by your noble excitement. Oh, no, no; I am not such a villain as that!"

"What do you say?"

"I may be sentenced to several years' imprisonment."

"Well," replied Rigolette, with calmness and firmness, "they shall see that I am an honest girl, and they will not refuse to marry us in the prison-chapel."

"But I may be put in prison at a distance from Paris."

"Once your wife, I will follow you and settle in the city where you may be. I shall find work there and can see you every day."

"But I shall be disgraced in the eyes of all."

"You love me better than any one—don't you?"

"Can you ask me such a question?"

"Then of what consequence is it? So far from considering you as disgraced in my eyes, I shall consider you as the victim of your own kind heart."

"But the world will accuse, condemn, calumniate your choice."

"The world!—are not you the world to me—I to you? So let it say as it may!"

"Well, quitting prison at length, my life will be precarious—miserable. Repulsed on all sides I may, perhaps, find no employment, and then it is appalling to think! But if this corruption which besets me should seize on me in spite of myself, what a future for you!"

"You will never grow corrupted: no! for now you know that I love you, this thought will give you the power of resisting bad examples. You will reflect that if all repulse you when you quit your prison, your wife will receive you with love and gratitude, assured, as she will be, that you will still be an honest man. This language astonishes you, does it not? It astonishes even myself. I do not know whence I derive all I say to you: from the bottom of my soul, assuredly—and that must convince you!—that is, if you do not reject an offer made you most unreservedly—if you do not desire to reject the love of a poor girl who has only ——"

Germain interrupted Rigolette with impassioned voice,—

"Yes, indeed—I do accept—I do accept! yes, I feel it. I am assured it is sometimes cowardly to refuse certain sacrifices; it is to avow one's self unworthy of them. I accept them, noble, brave girl!"

"Really, really—are you really in earnest?"

"I swear to you; and you have, too, said something which greatly struck me, and gives me the courage I want."

"Delightful! And what did I say?"

"That, for your sake, I should in future continue an honest man. Yes, in this thought I shall find strength to resist the detestable influences which surround me. I shall brave contagion, and know how to keep worthy of your love the heart which belongs to you."

"Oh, Germain, how happy I am! If I have ever done any thing for you, how you recompense me now!"

"And then, observe, although you excuse my fault I shall never forget it. My future task will be double: to expiate the past and deserve the happiness I owe to you. For that I will do my best, and, as poor as I may be, the opportunity will not fail me, I am sure."

"Alas! that is true; for we always find persons more unfortunate than ourselves."

"And if we have no money, why ——"

"We give our tears, as I did for the poor Morels."

"And that is holy alms. '*Charity of the soul is quite equal to that which bestows bread.*'"

"You accept, then, and will never retract?"

"Never, never, my love—my wife! My courage returns to me, and I seem as though awaking from a dream, and no longer doubt myself. My heart would not beat as it does if it had lost its noblest energies."

"Oh, Germain, how you delight me in speaking so! How you assure me, not for yourself but for myself! So you will promise me, now you have my love to urge you on, that you will no longer be afraid to speak to these wicked men, so that you may not excite their anger against you?"

"Take courage! When they saw me sad and sorrowful, they accused me, no doubt, of being a prey to my remorse; but when they see me proud and joyous, they will believe their pernicious example has gained on me."

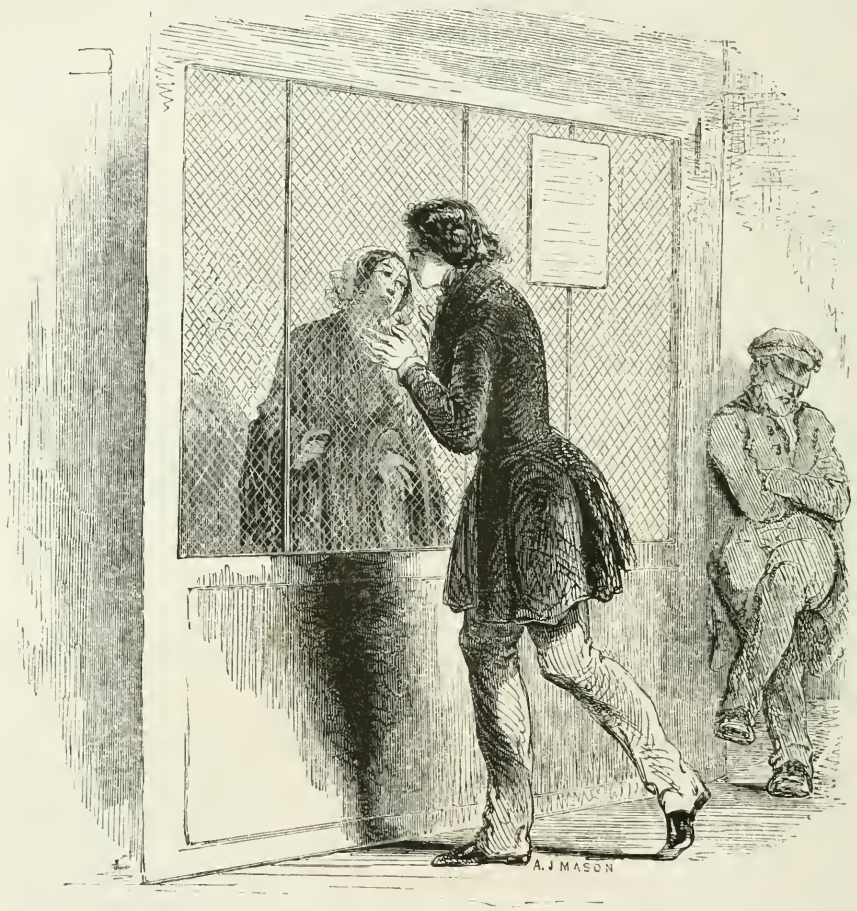
"That's true; they will no longer suspect you, and my mind will be easy. So mind, no rashness, no imprudence, now you belong to me—for I am your little wife."

At this moment the turnkey awoke.

"Quick," said Rigolette, in a low voice, and with a smile full of grace

and modest tenderness, "quick, my dear husband, and give me a loving kiss on my forehead through the grating; that will be our betrothing." And the young girl, blushing, bowed her forehead against the iron trellis.

Germain, deeply affected, touched with his lips through the grating her pure and white forehead.



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"Oh, oh! what, three o'clock already?" said the turnkey; "and visitors ought to leave at two! Come, my dear little girl," he added, addressing the grisette, "it's a pity, but you must go."

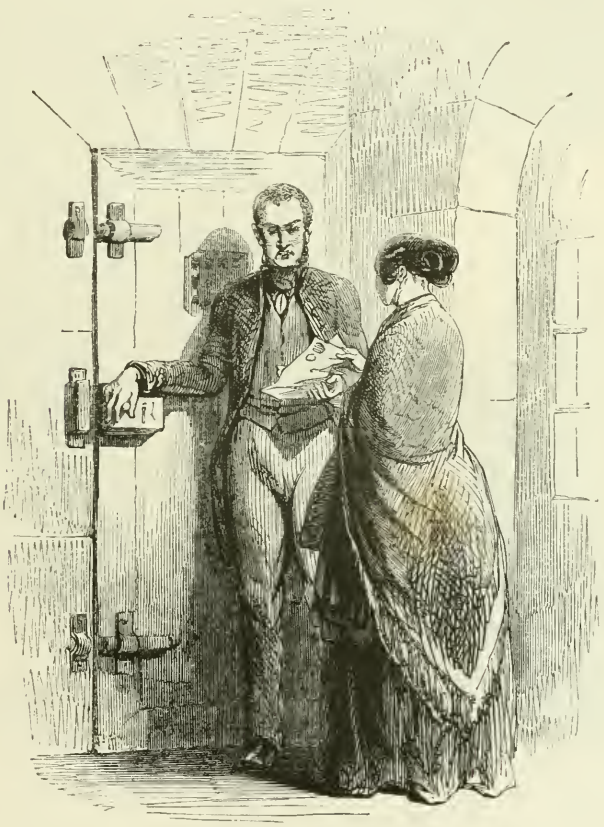
"Oh, thanks, thanks, sir, for having allowed us thus to converse alone! I have given Germain courage, and now he will look livelier, and need not fear his wicked companions."

"Make yourself easy," said Germain, with a smile; "I shall in future be the gayest in the prison."

"That's all right, and then they will no longer pay any attention to you," said the guardian.

"Here is a cravat I have brought for Germain, sir," said Rigolette. "Must I leave it at the entrance?"

"Why, perhaps, you should; but still it is such a very small matter! So, to make the day complete, give him your present yourself." And the turnkey opened the door of the corridor.



"This good man is right, and the day will be complete," said Germain, receiving the cravat from Rigolette's hands, which he pressed tenderly.

"Adieu! and to our speedy meeting! Now I am no longer afraid to ask you to come and see me as soon as possible."

"Nor I to promise you. Good-by, dear Germain!"

"Good-by, my dear girl!"

"Wear the cravat, for fear you should catch cold: it is so damp!"

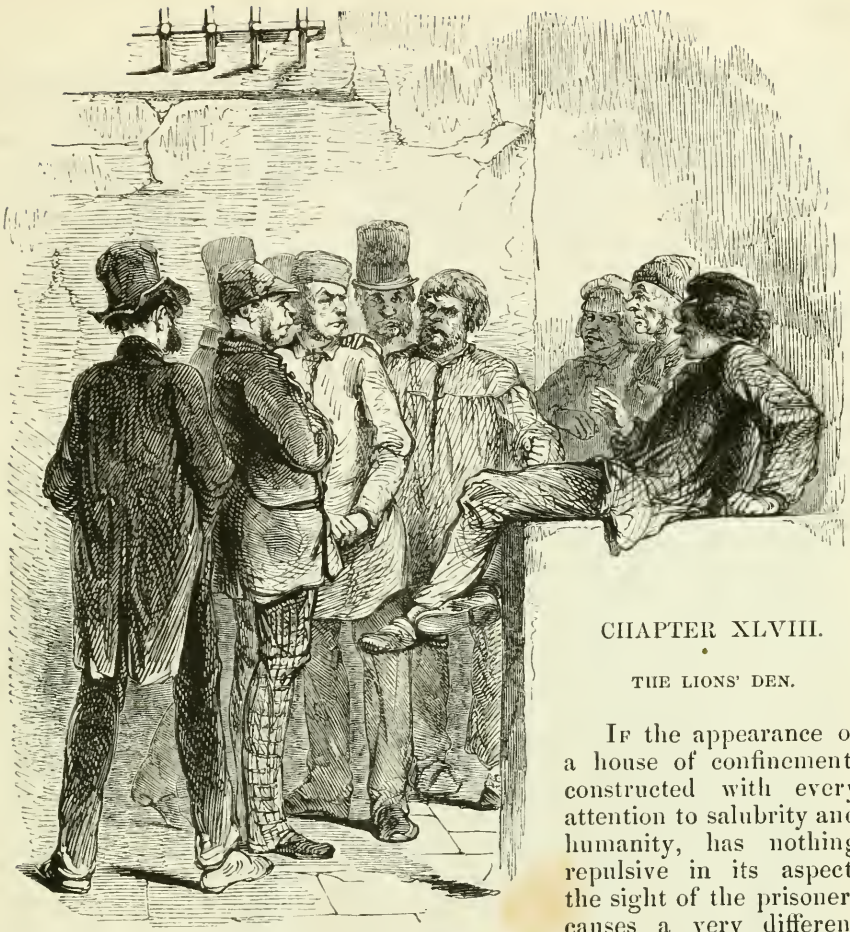
"What a pretty cravat! And when I reflect that you knitted it for me! Oh, I will never let it leave me!" said Germain, pressing it to his lips.

"Now then, your spirits will revive, I hope! And so good-by, once more! Thank you, sir! And now I go away, much happier and more assured. Good-by, Germain!"

"Farewell, my dear little wife!"

"Adieu!"

A few minutes afterwards, Rigolette, having put on her goloshes and taken her umbrella, left the prison more joyfully than she had entered it. During the conversation of Germain and the grisette, other scenes were passing in one of the prison yards, to which we will now conduct the reader.



CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE LIONS' DEN.

If the appearance of a house of confinement, constructed with every attention to salubrity and humanity, has nothing repulsive in its aspect, the sight of the prisoners causes a very different feeling. At the sight of the criminals who fill the gaols, we are at first seized with a shudder of fear and horror. It is only after some reflection that this is overcome, and feelings of pity mixed with bitterness overcome us.

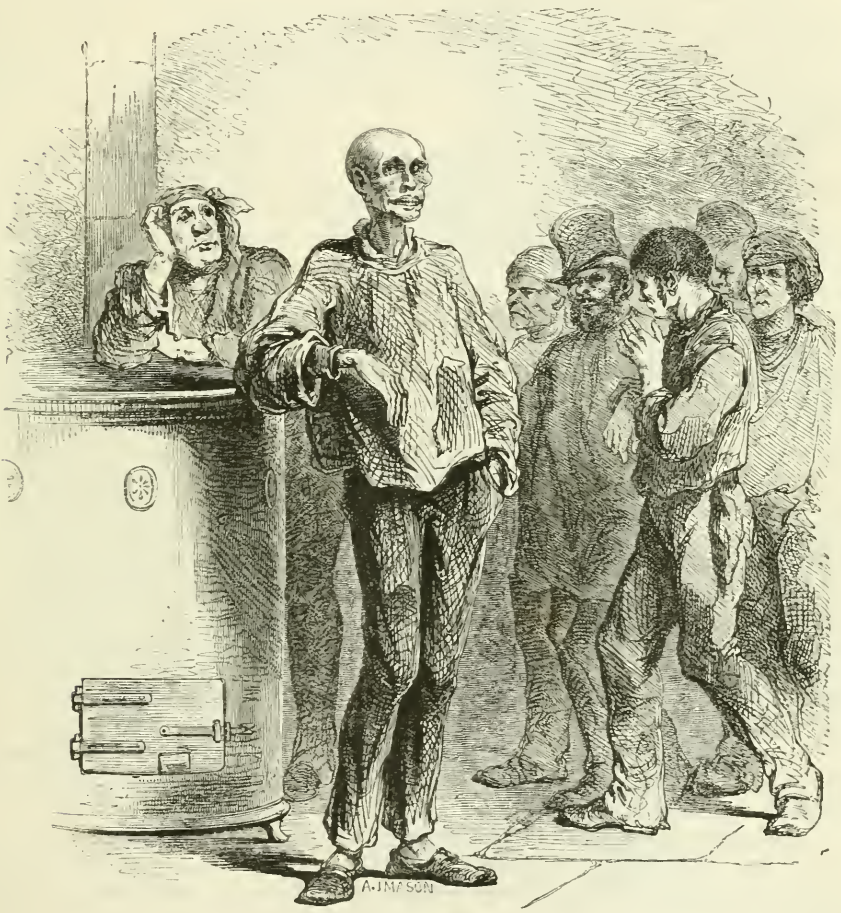
To understand the feeling of horror and fear, our reader must follow us to the Fosse aux Lions (the Lions' Den), one of the yards in La Force so called. In this are usually placed the most dangerous criminals, whose ferocity, or the charges against whom, are most serious. At this time they had been compelled to place there, in consequence of the alterations making in the prison, many other prisoners. These, although equally under accusations and awaiting the assizes, were almost all respectable persons in comparison with the usual occupants of the Lions' Den. The sky, gloomy, grey, and rainy, cast a dull light over the scene we are about to depict, and which took place in the centre of a yard of considerable extent, square, and enclosed by high white walls, having here and there several grated windows. At one end of this yard was a narrow door with a wicket; at the other end, at the entrance to the day-room, a large apartment with a stove in the centre, surrounded by wooden benches, on

which were sitting and lying several prisoners conversing together. Others, preferring exercise, were walking up and down the walks, four or five of a row, arm in arm. It requires the pencil of Salvator or Goya in order to sketch the different specimens of physical and moral ugliness, to render in its hideous fantasy the variety of costumes worn by these men, for the most part covered with squalid rags—for being only *accused, i.e. supposed innocent*, they were not clad in the usual uniform of the central houses. Some, however, wore it; for, on their entrance into gaol, their rags appeared so filthy and infected that, after the usual washing and bath, they had the frock and trousers of coarse grey cloth, as worn by the criminals, assigned to them.

A phrenologist would have observed attentively those embrowned and weather-beaten countenances, those flat or narrow foreheads, those cruel or crafty looks, the wicked or stupid mouth, the enormous neck—they nearly all presented frightful resemblances to brutes. In the cunning looks of one was seen the perfidious subtlety of the fox, in another was the sanguinary rapacity of the bird of prey, in a third the ferocity of the tiger; and, in all, the animal stupidity of the brute. We will sketch one or two of the most striking physiognomies in the Fosse aux Lions.

Whilst the turnkey was watching his charge, a sort of council was being held in the day-room. Amongst the prisoners there assembled were Barbillon and Nicolas Martial. The prisoner who appeared to *preside and lead* in this debate was a scoundrel called the Skeleton, whose name has been often mentioned by the Martial family in the Isle du Ravageur. The Skeleton was *prévôt*, or captain, of the day-room. This fellow was tall and about forty years of age, fully justifying his sinister nickname by a meagreness impossible to describe, but which might almost be termed osteologic. If the countenance of the Skeleton presented more or less analogy with that of the tiger, the vulture, or the fox, the shape of his forehead, receding as it did, his bony, flat, and lengthened jaws, supported by a neck of disproportioned length, instantly reminded you of the conformation of a serpent. Complete baldness increased still more this hideous resemblance, for beneath the corded skin of his forehead, nearly as flat as a reptile's, might be distinguished the smallest protuberances, the smallest sutures of his skull. His beardless face was exactly like old parchment tightly distended over the bones of his face, and only somewhat stretched from the projection of the cheekbone to the angle of the lower jaw, the working of which was distinctly visible. His eyes, small and lowering, were so deeply imbedded, and the rim of his brow so prominent, that under his yellow brow, when the light fell, were seen two orbits literally filled with shadows; and, a little further on, the eyes seemed to disappear in the depths of these two dark cavities, these two black holes, which gave so sinister an aspect to the skeleton head. His long teeth, whose alveolar projections were to be accurately traced beneath the tanned skin of his bony and flat jaws, were almost continually developed by an habitual sneer. Although the stiffened muscles of this man were almost reduced to tendons, he possessed extraordinary strength, and the strongest resisted with difficulty the grasp of his long arms, his long and lean fingers. He had the formidable clutch of a skeleton of iron. He wore a blue smock-frock, very short, and which

exposed (and he was vain of it) his knotted hands and half his fore-arm, or rather two bones, the *radius* and the *ulna* (this anatomy will be excused us), two bones enveloped in a coarse and black skin, separated by a deep groove, in which were some veins hard and dry as cords. When he placed his hands on a table he seemed, as Pique-Vinaigre justly remarked, as if he were *spreading out a game of knuckle-bones.*



The Skeleton, after having passed fifteen years of his life at the galleys for an attempt at robbery and murder, had broken his ban and been taken in the very act of theft and murder. The last assassination had been committed with circumstances of such ferocity, that the ruffian made up his mind, and with reason, that he should be condemned to death. The influence which the Skeleton exercised over the other prisoners from his strength, energy, and wickedness, had caused him to be chosen by the

director of the prison as *prévôt* of the dormitory — that is to say, the Skeleton was charged with the police of the chamber as far as concerned its order, arrangement, and the cleanliness of the room and the beds, a duty which he discharged perfectly; and no prisoner dared to fail in the cares and duties which he superintended. The Skeleton was discoursing with several prisoners, amongst whom were Barbillon and Nicolas Martial.

"Are you sure of what you say?" inquired the Skeleton of Martial.

"Yes, yes—a hundred times, yes! Father Micou heard it from the Gros-Boiteux, who has already tried to knock this hound on the head because he *peached* about some one."

"Then let's *do* for him—brush him up!" said Barbillon. "The Skeleton was already inclined to give that skulking Germain a turn of his hand."

The *prévôt* took his pipe from his mouth for a moment, and then said, in a tone so low and husky as to be scarcely audible,—

"Germain kept aloof from us, gave himself airs, watched us—for the less one talks the more one listens. We meant to get rid of him out of the Fosse aux Lions, and if we had given him a quiet squeeze, they'd have taken him away."

"Well, then," inquired Nicolas, "what alteration need there be now?"

"This alteration," replied the Skeleton; "that if he has turned informer, as the Gros-Boiteux declares, he mus'n't get off with a quiet squeeze."

"By no manner o' means!" said Barbillon.

"We must make an example of him," continued the Skeleton, warming as he went on. "It is not now the *nabs* who look out for us, but the *noses*. Jacques and Gauthier, who were guillotined the other day, were informed against—*nosed;* Rousillon, sent to the galleys for life—*nosed.*"

"And me, and my mother, and Calabash, and my brother at Toulon," cried Nicolas; "have we not all been *nosed* by Bras-Rouge? To be sure we have: because, instead of shutting him up here with us, he has been sent to La Roquette. They daren't put him with us; he knew he had done us wrong, the old ——!"

"Well," added Barbillon, "and didn't Bras-Rouge *nose* upon me too?"

"And I, too," said a young prisoner, in a thin voice, and lisping affectedly. "I was *split* upon by Jobert, who had proposed to me a little affair in the Rue Saint-Martin."

The latter personage, with a fluty voice, pale, fat, and effeminate face, and with a sly and treacherous glance, was singularly attired. He wore as a head-dress a red pocket-handkerchief, which exposed two locks of light brown hair close to his temples; the two ends of his handkerchief formed a projecting rosette over his forehead; his cravat was a merino shawl, with a large pattern, which crossed over his chest; his mulberry-coloured waistcoat almost disappeared beneath the tight waistband of a very large pair of trousers of plaid, with very large and different-coloured checks.

"And was not that shameful?—such a man to turn against me!" he added, in his shrill voice. "Yet, really, nothing in the world would have made me distrust Jobert."

"I know very well that he sold you, Javatte," replied the Skeleton, who seemed to protect the prisoner peculiarly; "and as a proof that they have done for thy *nose* the same as they have done for Bras-Rouge, they have not dared to leave Jobert here, but sent him to the *stone jug* of the Conciergerie. Well, there must be an end put to this! there must be an example: for traitors are doing the work of the police, and believe them-

selves safe in their skins because they are put in a different prison from those on whom they have *nosed*."

"That's true."

"To prevent this, every prisoner should consider every *nose* as his deadly enemy. Whether he informs against Peter or James, here or there, that's nothing; fall on him tooth and nail. When we have made *cold*

meat of four or five in the prisons, the others will think twice before they turn *snitch*."

"You're right, Skeleton," said Nicolas; "and let Germain be number one."

"And no mistake," replied the *prévôt;* "but let us wait until the Gros-Boiteux arrives. When, for instance, he has proved to all the world that Germain is a *nose* the thing shall be settled out of hand; the calf shall bleat no more, we'll stop his wind."

"And what shall we do with the turnkeys who watch us?" inquired the prisoner whom the Skeleton called Javatte.

"I have my plan, which Pique-Vinaigre will aid."

"He! he's a coward."

"And no stronger than a flea."

"I'm awake. Where is he?"

"He had come out of the visiting-room, but went back again to see his lawyer."

"And is Germain still in the visiting-room?"

"Yes, with the little wench who comes to see him."

"When he returns be on your guard. But we must wait for Pique-Vinaigre, without him we can do nothing."

"No?"

"No."

"And Germain shall be done for?"

"I'll take care of that."

"But with what? they have taken all our knives away."

"What do you think of these nippers, would you like to have your neck in their clutch?" asked the Skeleton, opening his long bony fingers, hard as iron.

"You'll choke him?"

"Decidedly."

"But if they find out that it is you?"

"Well, what if they do? Am I a calf with *two* heads, such as they shew at the fair?"

"No, that's true; a man has but one throat, and yours——"

"Is sentenced; my lawyer told me so yesterday. I was taken with my hand in the bag, and my knife in the weasand of the *stiff'un*. I'm a *return horse, too;* so nothing can be more certain. I'll drop my head into Charlot's (the headsman's) basket, and I shall see if it's true that he does his customers, and puts sawdust into his basket instead of the bran which government allows us."

"True, the guillotine has a right to its bran. Now, I remember my father was robbed in the same way," said Nicolas Martial, with a ferocious grin.

This horrid jest created immense laughter amongst the prisoners. This is fearful, but far from exaggeration: we give but a faint idea of these conversations, so common in prisons. The prisoners were all laughing joyously.

"Thousand thunders!" cried the Skeleton, "I wish they who punish us would come and see how we bear it. If they will come to the Barrière Saint-Jacques the day of my benefit they will hear me address the audience

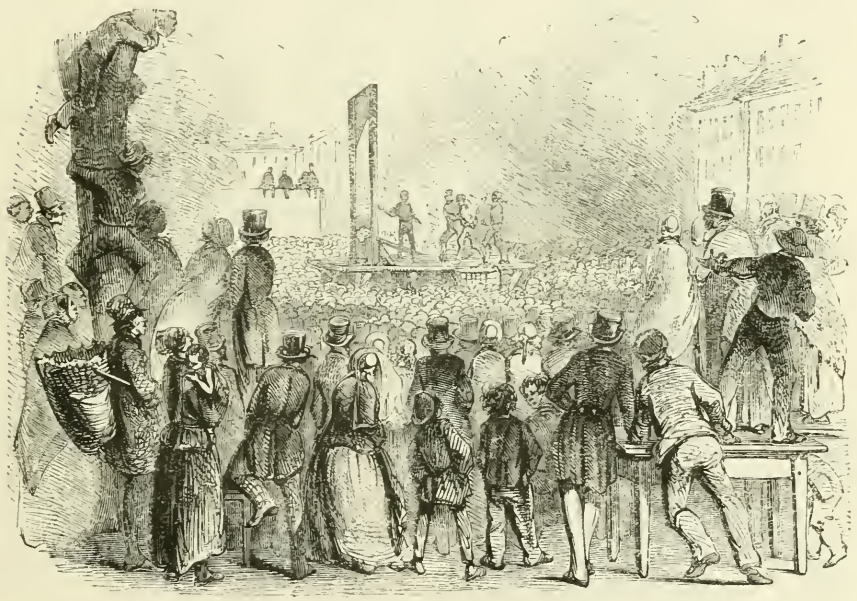
in a neat and appropriate speech, and say to Charlot, in a gentlemanly tone, '*Père Samson, the cord if you please.*'"*

Fresh bursts of laughter hailed this jest.

"And then Charlot opens the *baker's* (the devil's) door," continued the Skeleton, still smoking his pipe.

"Ah! bah! is there a devil?"

"You fool, I was only joking. There's a sharp blade, and they put a head under it, and that's all. And now that I know my road, and must stay at the abbey of *Mont-à-Regret* (guillotine) I would rather go there to-day than to-morrow," said the Skeleton, with savage excitement. "I wish I was there now,—my blood comes into my mouth when I think what a crowd there'll be to see me; there'll be, at least, I should say, from four



to five thousand who will push and squeeze to get good places, and they'll hire seats and windows, as if for a grand procession. I hear 'em now crying, 'Seats to let! seats to let!' And then there'll be troops of soldiers, cavalry and infantry, and all for me—for the Skeleton! That's enough to rouse a man if he was as big a coward as Pique-Vinaigre, that would make you walk like a hero. All eyes on you, and that makes a fellow pluck up; then—'tis but a moment—a fellow dies *game*, and that annoys

* To understand this horrid jest the English reader must know that the doors in France are usually opened by the porter, who sits in his room and pulls a cord to allow the person going out to have free egress; and the blade of the guillotine glides down the grooves of the machine, after a spring has been set in motion, by touching a cord that acts upon it.

the big-wigs and curs, and gives the knowing ones pluck to face the chopper."

"That's true, on Gospel!" added Barbillon, trying to imitate the fearful audacity of the Skeleton; "they think to make us funky when they set Charlot to work to get his shop open at our expense."

"Ah! bah!" said Nicolas, in his turn; "we laugh at Charlot and his shop: it is like the prison or the galleys—we laugh at them, too; and so, that we may be all friends together, let's be jolly as long as we can."

"The thing that would do us," said the shrill-voiced prisoner, "would be to put us in solitary cells day and night. They do say they mean to do so at last."

"In solitary cells!" exclaimed the Skeleton, with repressed rage; "don't talk of it! Solitary cell—alone! Hold your tongue! I would rather have my arms and legs cut off! Alone within four walls!—quite alone—without having our *pals* to laugh with! Oh, that will never be! I like the galleys a hundred times better than the central prison, because at the galleys, instead of being shut up, one is out of doors, sees the world, people going and coming, and have our jokes and fun. Well I'd rather be done for at once than be put in a solitary cell, if only for a year. Yes, for at this moment I am sure to be guillotined—ain't I? Well, if they said to me, Would you rather have a year of solitary confinement? I should hold out my neck. A year all alone!—why, is it possible? What do they suppose a man thinks of when he is alone?"

"Suppose you were carried there by main force?"

"Well, I wouldn't stay; I would make such use of my hands and feet that I should escape," replied the Skeleton.

"But if you couldn't—if you were unable to escape?"

"Then I'd kill the first person who came near me, in order to have my head chopped off."

"But if, instead of sentencing such as us to death, they condemned us to be in solitary confinement for life?"

The Skeleton appeared struck at this remark, and, after a moment's silence, replied,—

"Why, then, I'll tell you what I should do—I should dash out my brains against the walls. I would starve rather than be in a solitary cell. What! all alone—all my life alone with myself—and no chance of escape? I tell you it is impossible. Well, you know, there's no man more reckless than I am—I'd kill a man for a dollar, and for nothing if my honour was concerned; they believe I have only killed two persons, but if the dead could tell tales there are five tongues could say what I have done."

The ruffian was *boasting*. These sanguinary declarations are still another trait of the hardened criminals. A governor of a prison said to us, "*If the assassinations boasted of by these scoundrels were really committed, the population would be decimated.*"

"And I, too," said Barbillon, desirous of *bragging* in his turn; "they think I only silenced the husband of the milk-woman in the Cité, but I *did* many others with tall Robert, who *suffered* last year."

"I was going to say," continued the Skeleton, "that I fear neither fire nor devil. Well, if I were in a solitary cell, and certain I could not escape,—thunder! I believe I should be frightened!"

"And so, if you had to begin your time over again as *prig* and *throttler*, and if, instead of central houses, galleys, and guillotine, there were only solitary cells, you would hesitate before such a chance?"

"*Ma foi! I believe I really should!*" replied the Skeleton.

And he said truly. It is impossible to describe the vast terror which such ruffians experience at the very idea of being in solitary confinement. And is not this very terror an eloquent plea in favour of this punishment?

* * * * * *

An uproarious noise made by the prisoners in the yard interrupted the Skeleton's council. Nicolas rose hastily, and went to the door of the room to discover the cause of this unusual tumult.

"It is the Gros-Boiteux," said Nicolas, returning.

"The Gros-Boiteux!" exclaimed the *prevôt*. "And has Germain come down from the visiting-room?"

"Not yet," replied Barbillon.

"Then let him make haste," said the Skeleton, "and I'll give him an order for a new coffin."

The Gros-Boiteux, whose arrival was so warmly hailed by the prisoners in the lions' den, and whose information might be so fatal to Germain, was a man of middle stature; but, in spite of being fat and crippled, he was nimble and vigorous. His countenance, brutal like that of most of his companions, was of the bulldog character: his low forehead, his small yellow eyes, his flaccid cheeks, his heavy jaws, the lower being very projecting, and armed with long teeth, or, rather, broken fangs, which in places projected beyond his lips, made his resemblance to that animal the more striking. He wore a felt cap, and over his clothes a blue cloak with a fur collar.

The Gros-Boiteux was accompanied into the prison by a man about thirty years of age, whose tanned and freckled face appeared less dissolute than that of the other prisoners, although he affected to appear as dogged as his companion. From time to time his features became overcast, and he smiled bitterly. The Gros-Boiteux soon found himself amongst his boon companions and acquaintances, and he could scarcely reply to the congratulations and kind words which came to him from all sides.

"What, is it you, old boy? All right! now we shall have some fun."

"You havn't hurried yourself."

"Still I have done all I could to see my friends again as soon as possible, and it was no fault of mine if the *stone jug* didn't claim me sooner."

"Don't doubt you, old boy! and a man doesn't pick out a gaol as his favourite residence: but once trapped he does his best to be jolly."

"And so we shall be, for Pique-Vinaigre is here."

"Is he? What one of the old customers of Melun? why that's capital! for he'll help us to pass the time with his stories, and his customers will not fail him, for there are more recruits coming in."

"Who are they?"

"Why, just now at the entrance, whilst I came in, I saw two fresh chaps brought in; one I didn't know, but the other, who wore a blue cotton cap and a grey blouse, I have seen before somewhere. He is a powerful-looking man, and I think I have met him at the Ogress's of the *White Rabbit*."

"I say, Gros-Boiteux, don't you remember at Melun I bet you a wager that in less than a year you would be nabbed again?"

"To be sure I do, and you've won. But what are you here for?"

"Oh, I was caught on the *prigging lay—à la Americaine*."

"Ah, always in the same line."

"Yes, I continue in my usual small way. The rig is common, but there are always *culls;* and but for the stupidity of a *pal* I should not be here. However, once caught twice warned; and when I begin again I will be more careful—I have my plan."

"Ah, here's *Cardillac!*" said the Boiteux, going to a little man

wretchedly dressed, with ill-looking aspect, full of craft and malignity, and with features partaking of the wolf and fox. "Ah! old chap, how are you?"

"Ah, old limper," replied the prisoner nicknamed *Cardillac* to the Gros-Boiteux; "they said every day, 'He's coming—he's not coming!' but you are like the pretty girls, you do as you like."

"Yes, to be sure."

"Well," replied Cardillac, "is it for something *spicy* that you are here now?"

"Yes, my dear fellow, I had done one or two good things, but the last was a failure; it was an out-and-out go, and may still be done: unfortunately, Frank and I overshot the mark."

And the Gros-Boiteux pointed to his companion, towards whom all eyes now turned.

"Ah, so it is—it's Frank!" said Cardillac; "I didn't know him again

because of his beard. What, Franky! why I thought you'd turned honest, and was, at least, mayor of your village."

"I was an ass, and I've suffered for it," said Frank, quickly; "but every sin has its repentance. I was good once, and now I'm a prig for the rest of my days. Let 'em look out when I get out."

"What happened to you, Frank?"

"What happens to every free convict who is donkey enough to think he can turn honest. Fate is just! When I left Melun I'd saved nine hundred and odd francs."

"Yes, that's true," said the Gros-Boiteux, "all his misfortunes have come from his keeping his savings, instead of spending 'em jolly when he left the 'jug.' You see what repentance leads to!"

"They sent me, *en surveillance*, to Etampes," replied Frank; "being a locksmith by trade, I went to a master in my line and said to him, 'I am a freed convict, I know no one likes to employ such, but here are nine hundred francs of my savings, give me work, my money will be your guarantee, for I want to work and be honest.'"

"What a joke!"

"Well, you'll see how it answered. I offered my savings as a guarantee to the master locksmith that he might give me work. 'I'm not a banker to take money on interest,' says he to me, 'and I don't want any freed convicts in my shop. I go to work in houses to open doors where keys are lost, I have a confidential business, and if it was known that I employ a freed convict amongst my workmen, I should lose my customers. Good day, my man.'"

"Wasn't that just what he deserved, Cardillac?"

"Exactly."

"You simpleton!" said the Gros-Boiteux to Frank, with a paternal air; "instead of breaking your *ban* at once, and coming to Paris to melt your mopusses, so that you might not have a sous left, but be compelled to return to robbing. You see the end of your fine ideas."

"That's what you are always saying," said Frank, with impatience; "it is true I was wrong not to spend my 'tin,' for I have not even enjoyed it. Well, as there were only four locksmiths in Etampes, he whom I had first addressed had soon told all the others, and they said to me as had said their fellow-tradesman, '*No, thank ye.*' All sung the same song."

"Only see, now, what it all comes to! You must see that we are all marked for life."

"Well, then, I was on the idle of Etampes, and my money melted and melted," continued Frank, "but no work came. I left Etampes, in spite of my surveillance, and came to Paris, where I found work immediately, for my employer did not know who or what I was, and it's no boast to say I am a first-rate workman. Well, I put my seven hundred francs which I had remaining into an agent's hands, who gave me a note for it, when that was due he did not pay me, so I took my note to a huissier, who brought an action against him, and recovered the money, which I left in his hands, saying to myself there's something for a rainy day. Well, just then I met the Gros-Boiteux."

"True. Well, Frank was a locksmith and made keys, I had a job in which he could be of service, and I proposed it to him. I had the prints,

and he had only to go to work, when, only imagine, he refused—he meant to turn honest. So, says I, I'll arrange about that, I'll make him work,

for his own interest. So I wrote a letter, without any signature, to his master, and another to his fellow-workmen, to inform them that Frank was a liberated convict—so the master turned him away. He went to another employer and worked there for a week—same game again; and if he had gone to a dozen I'd have served him in the same way."

"And if I had suspected that it was you who had informed against me," answered Frank, "I'd have given you a pleasant quarter of an hour to pass. Well, I was at length driven away from my last employer as a scamp only fit to be hanged. Work, then—be respectable—so that people may say, not '*What are you doing?*' but '*What have you done?*' Once on the *pavé* I said, 'Fortunately I have my savings to fall back upon.'

So I went to the huissier, but he had *cut his stick*, and spent my tin; and here was I without a feather to fly with, not even enough to pay for a week's lodging. What a precious rage I was in! Well, at this moment comes the Gros-Boiteux, and he took advantage of my situation. I saw it was useless trying to be honest, and that once on the *prig* there's no leaving it. But, old Gros, I owe you a turn."

"Come, Frank, no malice!" replied the Gros-Boiteux. "Well, he did his part like a man, and we entered upon the business, which promised royally; but, unfortunately, at the moment when we opened our mouths to swallow the dainty bit, the *traps* were down upon us. Couldn't be helped, you know, lad! if it wasn't for that, why our profession would be too good."

"Yet if that vagabond of a huissier had not robbed me I should not have been here," said Frank, with concentrated rage.

"Well, well," continued the Gros-Boiteux, "do you mean to say that you were better off when you were breaking your back with work?"

"I was free," retorted Frank.

"Yes, on Sundays and when you were out of work, but the rest of the week you were tied up like a dog, and never sure of employ. Why you don't know when you are well off."

"Will you teach me?" said Frank, bitterly.

"Well, you've a right to be vexed, for it was shameful to miss such a good stroke; but it is still to be done in a month or two. The people will become reassured, and it is a rich, very rich house. I shall be sentenced for breaking my ban, and so cannot resume the job, but if I find an amateur I will hand it over to him a bargain. My woman has the prints, and there is nothing to do but make new keys, and with the information I can give it must succeed. Why, there must be, at least, 400*l.* to lay hands on, and that ought to console you, Frank."

Frank shook his head, crossed his hands over his chest, and made no reply.

Cardillac took the Gros-Boiteux by the arms, led him into a corner of the yard, and said to him, after a moment's silence,—

"Is the affair you have failed in still good?"

"In two months as good as new."

"Can you prove it?"

"Of course."

"And what do you ask for it?"

"A hundred francs as earnest: and I will give you the word arranged with my woman, on which she will hand you the prints, from which you can make the false keys. And, moreover, if the thing comes off, I shall expect a fifth share of the swag to be handed over to my woman."

"That's not unreasonable."

"As I shall know to whom she has given the prints, if I am done out of my share, I shall know whom to inform against."

"And very right, too, if you were choused; but amongst *prigs* and *cracksmen* there's honour—we must rely on each other, or all business would be impossible."

Another anomaly in this horrid existence. This villain spoke the truth. It is very seldom that thieves fail in their faith in such arrange-

ments as these, but they usually act with a kind of good faith—or, rather, that we may not prostitute the word—we will say that necessity compels these ruffians to keep their words; for if they failed, as the companion of the Gros-Boiteux said, "All business would be impossible." A great number of robberies are arranged, bought, and plotted in this way in gaol —another pernicious result of confinement in common.

"If what you say is sure," continued Cardillac, "I can agree for the job. There are no proofs against me, I am sure to be acquitted, and in a fortnight I shall be out; let us add three weeks in order to turn oneself about, to get the false keys, and lay our plans, and then in six weeks from this——"

"You'll go to the job in the very nick of time."

"Well, then, it's a bargain."

"But how about the earnest? I must have something down."

"Here is my last button, and when I have no more—yet there are others left," said Cardillac, tearing off a button covered with cloth from his ragged blue coat, and then tearing off the covering with his nails, he shewed the Gros-Boiteux that, instead of a button-mould, it contained a piece of forty francs. "You see I can pay deposit," he added, "when the affair is arranged."

"That's the ticket, old fellow!" said the Gros-Boiteux: "and as you are soon going out, and have got rhino to work with, I can put you up to another thing—a real good go—the cheese—a regular affair which my woman and myself have been cooking up, and which only wants the finishing stroke. Only imagine a lone street in a deserted quarter, a ground-floor, looking on one side into an obscure alley, and on the other a garden, and here two old people, who go to roost with the cocks and hens since the riots, and, for fear of being robbed, they have concealed behind a panel, in a pot of preserves, a quantity of gold; my woman

found it out by gossiping with the servant. But I tell you this will be a dearer job than t' other, for it is in hard cash, and all cooked ready to eat and drink."

"We'll arrange it, be assured. But you havn't worked over well since you left the central?"

"Yes, I have had a pretty fair chance. I got together some trifles which brought me nearly sixty pounds. One of my best bites was a pull at two women who lodged in the same house with me in the Passage de la Brasserie."

"What at Daddy Micou's?"

"Yes."

"And your Josephine?"

"Just the same; a real ferret as ever. She cooks with the old couple I have mentioned to you, and so smelt out the pot with the golden honey in it."

"She's nothing but a trump!"

"I flatter myself she is. But, talking of trumps, you know the Chouette?"

"Yes: Nicolas has told me the Schoolmaster did for her, and he has gone mad."

"Perhaps from losing his sight through some accident. But I say, old fellow, it's quite understood that you will buy my two bargains, and so I shall not speak to any one else."

"Don't; and we will talk them over this evening."

"Well, and how are you getting on here?"

"Oh, we laugh and play the fool."

"Who's *prévôt* of the chamber?"

"The Skeleton."

"He's not to be joked with. I have seen him at Martials', in the Ile du Ravageur. We had a flare-up with Josephine and La Boulotte."

"By the way, Nicolas is here."

"So Micou told me when he made a lament that Nicolas was putting the screw on—an old hunks! Why what else were receivers made for?"

"Here is the Skeleton," said Cardillac, as the *prevôt* appeared at the door of the room.

"Young 'un, come forward," said the Skeleton to the Gros-Boiteux.

"Here I am," he replied, going into the apartment, accompanied by Frank, whose arm he held.

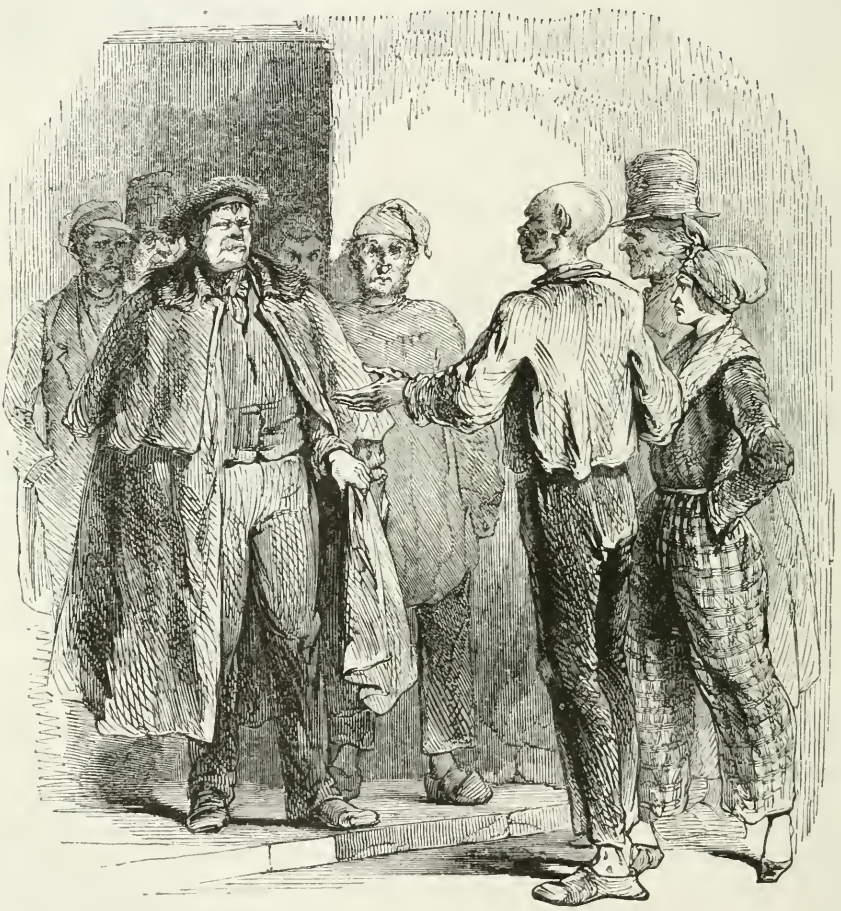
During the conversation between the Gros-Boiteux, Frank, and Cardillac, Barbillon had been, by order of the *prévôt*, to select twelve or fifteen of the *choicest* prisoners, who (in order to avoid the suspicions of the turnkey) had come separately into the day room. The other *détenus* had remained in the yard, and some of them, by Barbillon's advice, had appeared to be disputing, in order to take off the attention of the turnkey from the room in which were now assembled the Skeleton, Barbillon, Nicolas, Frank, Cardillac, the Gros-Boiteux, and some fifteen other prisoners, all awaiting with impatient curiosity until the *prévôt* should open the business.

Barbillon, charged with the look-out, placed himself near the door. The Skeleton, taking his pipe from his mouth, said to the Gros-Boiteux,—

"Do you know a slim young man named Germain, with blue eyes, brown hair, and the look of a noodle?"

"What! is Germain here?" inquired the Gros-Boiteux, with surprise, hate, and anger, in his looks.

"What, then, you know him?" said the Skeleton.



"Know him?" replied the Gros-Boiteux, "why, my lads, I denounce him as a '*nose*,' and he must be punished!"

"Yes! yes!" replied the prisoners.

"Are you sure it was he who informed against you?" asked Frank; "suppose it was a mistake,—we mustn't ill-use a man who's innocent."

This remark was displeasing to the Skeleton, who leaned over to the Gros-Boiteux, and said in his ear,—

"Who is this man?"

"One with whom I have worked."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes—but he hasn't gall enough—too much treacle in him."

"Good, I'll keep an eye on him."

"Tell us how Germain turned *nose*," said a prisoner.

"Yes, let us know all about it, Gros-Boiteux," continued the Skeleton, who did not take his eyes off Frank.

"Well, then," said Gros-Boiteux, "a man of Nantes, named Velu, a freed convict, brought up the young fellow, whose birth no one is acquainted with. When he had reached the proper age they put him into a banking-house at Nantes, thinking they had put a wolf to watch the money-box, and make use of Germain to do a bold and great stroke which had been meditated for a very long time. There were to be two *coups*, a forgery and a dip into the strong chest at the bank, something like a hundred and fifty thousand francs. All was arranged, and Velu relied on the young fellow as on himself, for the chap slept in the room in which the iron safe was. Velu told him his plans; Germain neither says yes nor no, but reveals all to his employer, and the very same evening *cuts his stick and mizzles* to Paris."

The prisoners burst into various murmurs of indignation and threats.

"He's a spy—*nose*—informer!—and we'll have the bones out of his body!"

"If it's agreeable, I'll seek a quarrel with him, and settle his hash!"

"Silence in the *stone jug!*" exclaimed the Skeleton, in a tone of command.

The prisoners were silent.

"Go on," said the *prévôt* to Gros-Boiteux, and he went on smoking.

"Believing that Germain had consented, and relying on his assistance, Velu and two of his friends attempted the job that same night. The banker was on the watch: one of Velu's friends was taken as he was entering a window, he himself escaping with difficulty. He reached Paris enraged at having been *sold* by Germain, and foiled in a splendid affair. One fine day he met the young fellow; it was in the open daylight, and he didn't dare do any thing, but he followed him, found out where he lived, and one night we two, Velu and little Ledru, fell on Germain. Unfortunately he escaped, and then changed his residence in the Rue du Temple, where he lived: we were unable to find him afterwards. But if he is here, I demand——"

"You have nothing to demand," said the Skeleton, in a tone of authority.

The Gros-Boiteux was instantly silent.

"I take the bargain off your hands—you will concede to me Germain's skin, and I'll flay him alive. I am not called the Skeleton for nothing. I am dead-alive, my grave is dug, and I run no risk in working for the *stone jug*. The informers destroy us faster than the police; they put *noses* of La Force into La Roquette, and the *noses* of La Roquette in the Conciergerie, and they think themselves safe. Now, mind you, when each prison shall have killed its informer, no matter when he may have informed, that will take away the others' appetite. I will set the example, and let others follow it."

All the prisoners, admiring the Skeleton's resolution, closed around

him. Barbillon himself, instead of remaining near the door, joined the group, and did not perceive another prisoner who had entered the room. This individual, clothed in a grey blouse, and wearing a blue cotton cap, with a red worsted border, pulled down over his eyes, started as he heard

the name of Germain mentioned, and then mingling with the Skeleton's admirers, gave out loud tones of approbation at the deadly determination of the *prévôt*.

"What an out-and-outer the Skeleton is!" said one.

"The devil himself is a fool to him!"

"This here's what I call a man!"

"If all were like him, wouldn't the flats be afeard?"

"He'll do a real service to the *stone jug*, and when they see this, the *noses* will look blue."

"And no mistake!"

"And since the Skeleton is safe to suffer, why it'll cost him nothing to put a *nose* out of joint!"

"Well, I think it's too bad," said Frank, "to kill the young chap."

"Why?—why?" exclaimed the Skeleton, in a savage tone; "no one has a right to protect a traitor."

"Yes, to be sure, he is a traitor—so much the worse for him," said Frank, after a moment's reflection.

These latter words, and Gros-Boiteux's assurance, put the doubts which the other prisoners had entertained against Frank to rest.

The Skeleton alone continued to mistrust him.

"And what are we to do with the turnkey? Tell us, *Dead-Alive*, for that is your name as well as the Skeleton," said Nicolas, with a grin.

"We must draw off his attention somehow."

"No! we'll hold him down by main force."

"Yes!"

"No!"

"Silence in the *stone jug!*" said the Skeleton.

There was complete silence.

"Listen to me!" said the *prévôt*, in his hoarse voice. "There is no means of doing the thing so long as the turnkey remains in the day-room or the walking-yard. I have no knife, and there must be a few groans, for the sneak will struggle."

"Well, what then?"

"Why, this. Pique-Vinaigre has promised to tell us to-day after dinner his story of *Gringalet and Cut-in-Half*. It rains, and we shall all come here, and the sneak will come and sit down there in the corner, as he always does. We'll give Pique-Vinaigre some sous that he may begin his tale. It will be dinner-time in the gaol—the turnkey will see us quietly employed in listening to the miraculous mystery of *Gringalet and Cut-in-Half*, and will, suspecting no harm, make off to the tap. As soon as he has left the yard, we shall have a quarter of an hour to ourselves, and the *nose* will be *cold meat* before the turnkey can return. I will undertake it—I who have done for stouter fellows in my day; and mind, I'll have no assistance!"

"Mind your eye!" cried Cardillac; "and what about the *huissier* who will always come for a gossip amongst us at dinner-time? If he comes into the room to listen to Pique-Vinaigre, and sees Germain done for, he will cry out for help. He's not one of us, the *huissier*—he's in a private cell, and we should mistrust him."

"Is there a *huissier* here?" said Frank, the victim as we know of a breach of trust, by Maître Boulard,—"is there a *huissier* here?" he repeated, with astonishment, "and what is his name?"

"Boulard," replied Cardillac.

"The very man!—the identical villain!" cried Frank, clenching his fists, "it is he who has stolen my savings!"

"The *huissier?*" inquired the *prévôt*.

"Yes, seven hundred francs of mine."

"You know him?—and has he seen you?" inquired the Skeleton.

"I have seen him, worse luck! But for him I should not be here."

These regrets sounded ill in the Skeleton's ears, and he fixed his malignant eyes steadfastly on Frank, who replied to several of his comrade's questions. Then stooping towards the Gros-Boiteux, he said in a low voice,—

"This is a fresh 'un who might tell the turnkey."

"No, I'll answer for his not informing against any one; yet still he has his scruples about going the whole hog, and he might aid Germain in defending himself. It would be best to get him out of the yard."

"I'll do it," said the Skeleton; and then aloud he said, "I say, Frank, won't you pitch into this thief of a lawyer?"

"Won't I, that's all!"

"Well, he's coming, and so look out."

"I'm ready, and he shall bear my marks!"

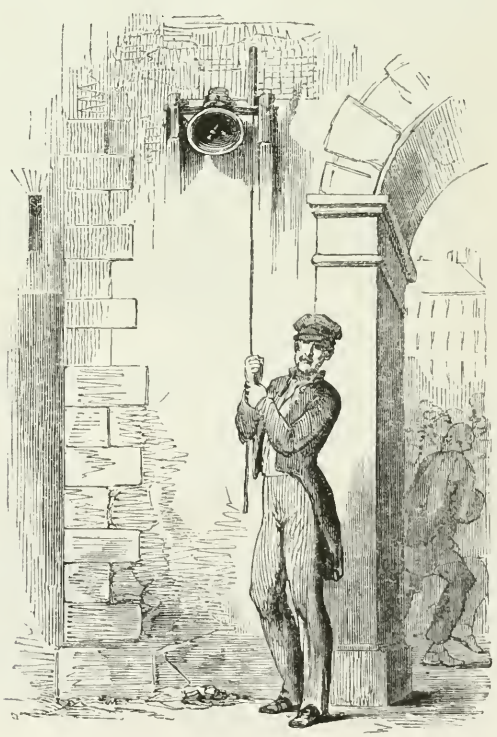
"We shall have a row, and they will send the *huissier* to his room and Frank to the black-hole," said the Skeleton, in an under tone to the Gros-Boiteux; "we shall thus get rid of both."

"What a lucky pitch! Why, this Skeleton is a prime minister!" said the Boiteux, admiringly; and then he added in a loud tone, "I say, shall we tell Pique-Vinaigre that we shall avail ourselves of his history to come over the turnkey and throttle the sneak?"

"By no means; Pique-Vinaigre is too soft and too cowardly. If he was up to the thing he wouldn't tell the story, but when the job is done and over he'll bear his share."

The dinner-bell sounded at this moment.

"To your puddings, dogs!" said the Skeleton; "Pique-Vinaigre and Germain will soon be in the yard. Now mind your eyes, my boys! They call me Dead-Alive, but the sneak is also dead-alive!"



CHAPTER XLIX.

THE STORY-TELLER.

The new prisoner of whom we have spoken, and who was dressed in a grey blouse, with a cotton cap on his head, had attentively listened to and energetically applauded the scheme for punishing the reserve of Germain, even at the expense of his life. This individual, whose form betokened

strength and power of no ordinary description, quitted the day-room with the rest of the prisoners without being noticed, and soon mingled with the different groups assembled in the courtyard to receive their rations, crowding round the persons employed in the distribution like so many

hungry cormorants. Each prisoner received a piece of the meat employed in making the day's soup, with about half a loaf of tolerably good bread. Such of the *détenus* as possessed the means were allowed to purchase drink at the wine-shop belonging to the prison, and even to go thither to regale themselves with their *lush;* while persons who, like Nicolas, had received provisions from their friends, generally made a sort of feast, to which they invited their most intimate acquaintances. The guests selected by the son of the executed felon upon the present occasion were the Skeleton, Barbillon, and, at the suggestion of the latter, Pique-Vinaigre, in order that good eating and drinking might quicken his talent for "story-telling."

The ham, hard-boiled eggs, cheese, and delicate white bread, wrung from the forced generosity of Micou the receiver, were arranged most temptingly on a bench in the day-room, and the Skeleton prepared himself to do ample justice to the repast, without, in the slightest degree, disturbing his appetite by the thoughts of the cold-blooded murder that was to follow it.

"Just go and see whether Pique-Vinaigre is coming, will you, my fine fellow?" cried he, addressing an individual who stood near him. "I tell you what it is, while I'm waiting to choke that stuck-up young fool they call Germain, I'm blowed if hunger and thirst won't choke me, if I have to dawdle about much longer. And here; don't forget to work old Frank up to do for the bum-bailiff, so that we may kill two birds with one stone, as the saying is."

"Don't you be afraid, old *Dead-alive!* If Frank don't make a stiff 'un of the *bailey*, it won't be our fault, that you may take your oath of!" And, while uttering these words, Nicolas went forth from the day-room.

At this moment Maître Boulard entered the yard, smoking a cigar—his hands buried in the pockets of his grey duffle dressing-gown, his peaked cap pulled down well over his ears, and a look of chuckling satisfaction upon his fat, full-blown countenance. He quickly espied Nicolas, who was busily occupied gazing around in search of Frank. That person was at that precise period of time busily occupied, in company with his friend Gros-Boiteux, in eating his dinner, and from the position in which they sat on one of the benches, they perceived not the presence of the bailiff. Acting in implicit obedience to the directions given him by the Skeleton, directly Nicolas, from the corner of his eye, descried the approach of Maître Boulard, he feigned entire ignorance of his vicinity, but made for the place where Frank and his companions were seated.

"How are you, my ticket?" inquired the bailiff of Nicolas.

"Bless me!" answered he; "I declare I didn't see you. I suppose you're like me, come out to take a sniff of fresh air and have your daily walk?"

"Why, that's about it. But I happen to have more reasons than one to-day; and I tell you how it is. But, first of all, catch hold of one of these cigars; they're deuced good ones. Come, don't be so missy and shy about it; take as many as you like. Hang it all, when men are shut up together in a place like this, they oughtn't to be stingy."

"You are very good, and so are your cigars. But you were saying you had several reasons for walking out to-day?"

"Well, and so I have. First and foremost, I don't feel as hungry as usual; so, thinks I, I'll go and look on while those chaps eat their dinner. Who knows but the sight of their jaws all working away together may screw me up a bit, and give me a relish against feeding-time?"

"A famous idea!" said Nicolas. "But if you really do want to see a couple of feeders, just draw this way. There!" added he, pointing to the bench on which Frank was sitting; "what do you think of a pair of grubbers like those? I should say we were better behind than before them, or they might even swallow us instead of those huge lumps of bread and cheese and onions so rapidly stowed away in their capacious jaws."

"Let's have a look at them!" said Maître Boulard.

"Well, to be sure!" cried Nicolas, with feigned surprise; "I declare one of them is Gros-Boiteux!"

Gros-Boiteux and Frank both turned round at these words. Stupefied and speechless, the bailiff continued to gaze in utter amazement at the man he had so wronged, while, starting up with a sudden spring, Frank threw down the morsel he had been eating, and darting on Maître Boulard, he seized him by the throat, exclaiming, "My money — my money; give me my money!"

"Hallo!—who are you?—what do you mean? Hands off, or you'll strangle me! I ——"

"My money, I say!"

"My good man, only calm yourself and listen to reason!"

"No, not till you give me back my money. What! arn't you satisfied with having brought me here? Can you not restore me what you stole from me?"

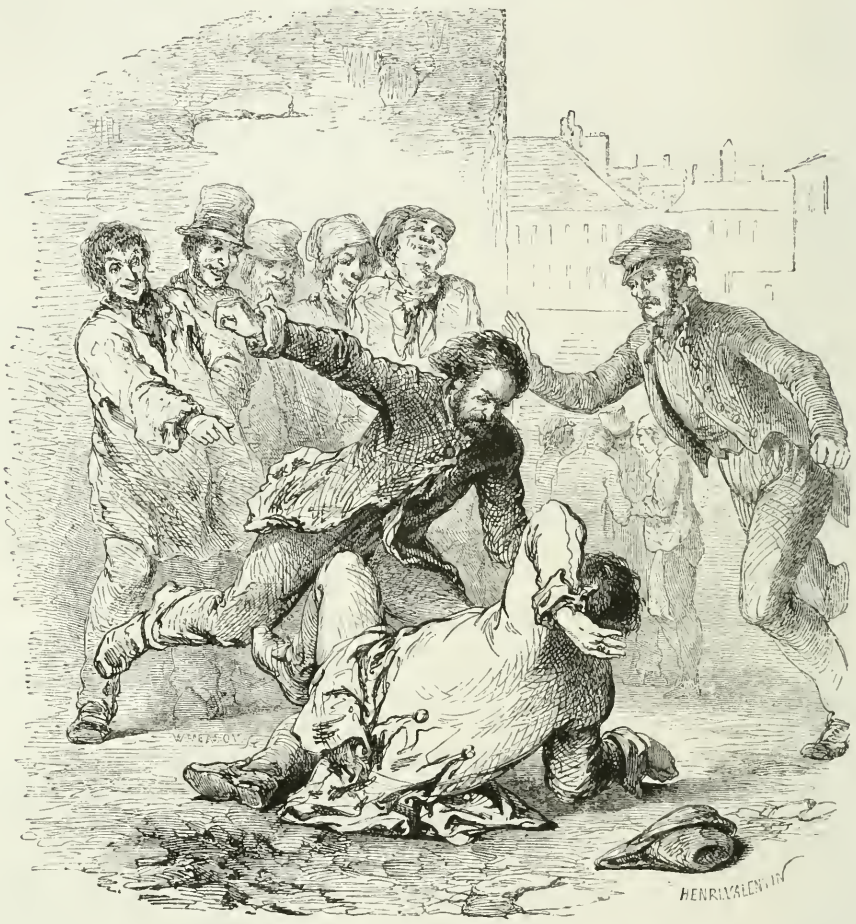
"But I—I—I—never——"

"I tell you again, if I get sent to the galleys 'tis all along of you; for had you not taken my little all from me, I should not have been driven to the necessity of robbing others; I might have lived and died an honest man. You may be acquitted, you may escape the punishment you deserve, but, at least, you shall carry my marks away with you. Ha! ha! you can come it grand, and swagger about here dressed up with your gold chains and trinkets, bought, no doubt, with the money of other poor devils who have been cheated by you as I have been. Take that for your pains—and that—that—and that! Now, have you had enough? No! —then here's for you again!"

"Help! help!" screamed the bailiff, as he rolled on the ground at Frank's feet, while his infuriated antagonist continued to belabour him with all his force.

The rest of the prisoners took little or no interest in this affray, but contented themselves with forming a circle round the two combatants, or rather the assailant and the assailed; for Maître Boulard, frightened and out of breath, made not the slightest resistance, but contented himself with warding off his adversary's blows as well as he could. Fortunately, the repeated cries of the poor maltreated bailiff reached the ears of one of

the superintending officers, by whose intervention he was rescued from the rough hands of Frank. Pale, terrified, and almost speechless with



terror, Maître Boulard arose. One eye was wholly closed by the severe beating he had received, and without giving himself time to pick up his cap, he wildly cried, as he rushed towards the officer,—

"Open the door!—let me out—let me out! I can't and I won't stay here another minute. Help, here!—help—help!"

"As for you," exclaimed the officer, grasping Frank by the collar, "do you come along with me before the governor. I know you'll catch it, too, for fighting; two days in the black-hole is the very least you'll get, I promise you."

"I've paid him off, at any rate," returned Frank; "and I don't care for the rest."

"I say," whispered Gros-Boiteux, while affecting to be merely helping to arrange his dress, "I say, you won't breathe a word of what's going to happen to the *sneak*, of course?"

"Oh, don't be afraid; 'tis just likely, had I been by, I might have stood up in his defence, because to kill a man in that manner is—hard—at least—and for such a trifle! But as for telling of it, or betraying you all—oh, no!"

"Now, then," called out the officer, "I say, *are* you coming or *are* you not?"

"That's all right!" said Nicolas; "we've got well rid of Frank and the bailiff, now let's go to work without further loss of time upon the *sneak!*"

As Frank was being led from the prison-yard, Germain and Pique-Vinaigre entered it. It was scarcely possible to recognise Germain, for his hitherto melancholy and dejected countenance was radiant with joy and exulting happiness. He walked proudly erect, casting around him a look of certain and assured content; he knew himself to be beloved, and with that consciousness all the horrors of his prison seemed to disappear. Pique-Vinaigre followed him with a timid, confused air, and, after much hesitation, at length plucked up sufficient courage to venture to address Germain, whose arm he gently touched, ere the intended victim had reached the group of prisoners who, from a distance, were examining him with looks of deadly hatred. Spite of himself, Germain shuddered at thus being brought into contact with a person of Pique-Vinaigre's appearance, whose wretched person and ragged attire were ill-calculated to impress any one with a favourable opinion of him; but recollecting the earnest advice of Rigolette, and feeling altogether too happy himself to act with any want of benevolence, Germain stopped, and said to Pique-Vinaigre in a gentle tone of voice,—

"What do you want with me, my friend?"

"I want to thank you."

"For what?"

"For the kindness shewn to my sister by the pretty young woman who visited you to-day."

"I really do not understand you," said Germain, much surprised.

"Well, then, I'll try and make you. Just now, when I was in the lodge of the prison, I saw the man who was on duty in the visitors' room a little while ago."

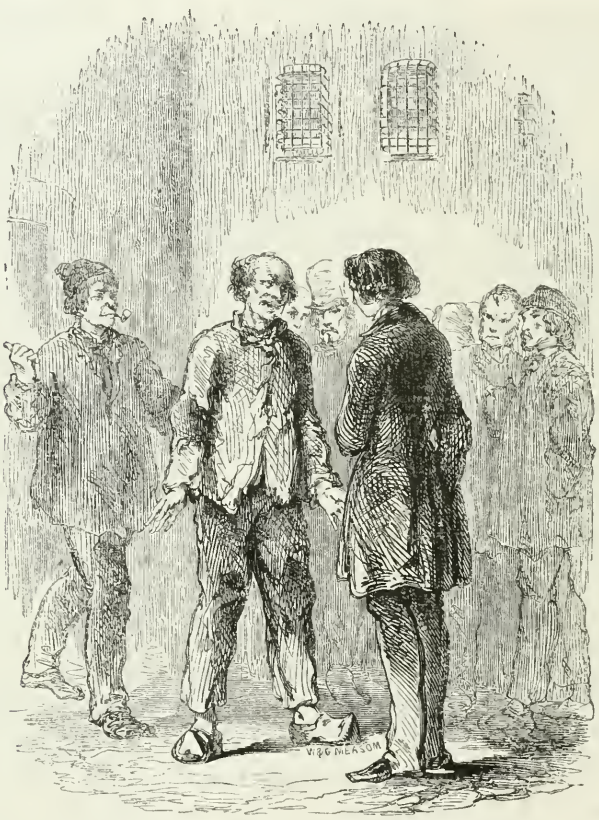
"Ah, yes, a very good-hearted sort of man, too; I recollect him well."

"It is not often you can apply that term to the gaolers of a prison, but the man I mean (Rousel is his name) is really deserving of being styled a kind, good-hearted man. So, all of a sudden, he whispers in my ear, 'I say, Pique-Vinaigre, my lad,' he says, 'do you know M. Germain?' 'Yes,' says I, 'I do,' says I; 'he's the *bête noire* of the prison-yard.'" Then suddenly interrupting himself, Pique-Vinaigre said to Germain, "I beg your pardon for calling you a *bête noire*. Don't think any thing of that, but listen to the end of my story."

"Oh, I'm listening; go on."

"'Yes,' says I, 'I know who you mean very well,' says I. 'You mean M. Germain, the *bête noire* of the prison-yard.' 'And of you, too, I suppose?' said the officer, in a severe and serious manner. 'Oh, bless

you,' says I, 'I am too good-natured, as well as too much of a coward, to venture to call any one disagreeable; and less M. Germain than any one else,' says I, 'for I don't see any harm in him, and other folks appear to me very cruel and unjust towards him.' 'That's all right then!' answers the officer; 'and I can tell you that you are bound to side with M. Germain, for he has been very kind to you,' he says. 'To me?' says I; 'how do you mean?' 'Well,' he answers, 'I don't mean M. Germain exactly,



and it ain't to you altogether he's been kind; but still, for all that,' says Rousel, 'you are bound to shew him your gratitude.'"

"Try," said Germain, smilingly, "and make me understand what it is you do mean!"

"That's precisely what I said to the officer. 'Speak more clearly,' I says. So then he makes answer, 'Why, it was not M. Germain, but the very pretty young person that was here just now to see him, who loaded your sister with all sorts of kindnesses. She overheard the poor thing telling you all her troubles; and directly as the creature went out, the

charming young woman as come visiting to M. Germain went and offered to serve her in every way she could.'"

"Dear, good Rigolette!" murmured Germain, deeply affected by this little incident; "she said not one word to me of all this."

"'Well, to be sure!' I says to the officer; 'what a poor stupid goose I am!' 'You are quite right—you are!' M. Germain—leastways, his friend—has been good to me—that is to say to my sister Jeanne, which is the same thing, only much more than if the favour had been done to myself."

"Poor, dear Rigolette!" said Germain; "ever the same tender, compassionate, generous-hearted creature!"

"So then the officer goes on to say how he heard all that passed between your nice young woman and my poor sister Jeanne. 'And now,' he says, 'Pique-Vinaigre, that you are aware of the fact, if you don't try to shew kindness by every means in your power to M. Germain, and more especially, if you should know of any plot got up against him and not warn him of it, why,' he says, 'Pique-Vinaigre, you would be a regular scamp and a blackguard.' 'I tell you what,' I makes answer and says, 'I'm an unfinished scamp as yet, but I'm no blackguard, and, what's more, I never will be worse than I am, for the sake of my poor dear Jeanne and her children; and so because M. Germain's friend has taken notice of my Jeanne, who is one of the best and worthiest creatures that ever lived—I may venture to boast of my sister, though I am ashamed of myself—but for that reason I will do all in my power to save or serve M. Germain: unfortunately, I can do but little, after all!' 'Never mind!—do your best; that is all I ask of you. But I will give you the pleasure of being the bearer of pleasing news to M. Germain, which, indeed, I have only just learned myself.'"

"What is it?" inquired Germain.

"That to-morrow morning there will be a vacant chamber you can have for paying for, then you will be all to yourself: the officer desired me to tell you so."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Germain; "how truly glad I am to hear it! That worthy man was right in saying you would be the bearer of pleasant news."

"Well, I do think so myself; for it is quite easy to perceive that you do not feel comfortable among such poor wretches as we are." Then suddenly breaking off, Pique-Vinaigre hastily added, in a low whisper, while feigning to stoop, as though searching for something he had dropped, "Hark ye, Monsieur Germain, the prisoners are all looking at us, wondering what we are talking about. I must go. But be on your guard; and if any one tries to quarrel with you, don't make any answer: they want a pretext for all attacking you at once. Barbillon is the one chosen to provoke you, so take especial care of him. I will try and turn the attention of the others from being directed towards you in a spiteful manner." And, with these words, Pique-Vinaigre rose up from his stooping position, with the air of one who had found the object of his search.

"Thanks, my good fellow!" said Germain, eagerly, as he separated from his companion; "rely on my prudence!"

Only that morning aware of the plot against Germain, which, as far as

he knew, consisted merely in an intention of involving him in some affray which should compel the governor of the prison to remove him to some other yard in the building, Pique-Vinaigre was not only ignorant of the murderous designs so recently projected by the Skeleton, but equally so that the conspirators intended to avail themselves of his recital of *Gringalet and Cut-in-Half* to deceive the vigilance of the officer on duty, as well as to beguile his attention from what was going on.

"Come on, old Make-believe!" said Nicolas to Pique-Vinaigre, as he advanced to meet him. "Throw away that lump of dog's-meat you have got in your hand; we have got a regular feast among us, and you are invited to it!"

"A feast?—la! how nice! What, out of the *Panier Fleuri*, or the *Petit Ramponneau?*—tell us which it is! But they are both such nice places, there isn't a pin to choose."

"Oh, you fool! Our feast is prepared in the day-room; all laid out so temptingly on a bench. There you'll see ham and eggs, and cheese, and —— It's my treat, mind!"

"Well, I'm one of the right sort to walk into it. But it seems a pity to throw away this good ration I have just received! I only wish my poor sister and her children could have the benefit of it. Ah, poor things! it's not often they see meat, unless, indeed, when they find a few scraps thrown out before the butcher's door."

"Oh, bother about your sister and her brats! Let's go in, or Barbillon and the Skeleton will leave nothing but empty trenchers for us!"

Nicolas and Pique-Vinaigre entered together into the day-room, where they found the Skeleton sitting astride on the bench on which the savoury viands were displayed, swearing and grumbling at the absence of the founder of the feast.

"Oh, there you are, you creeping animal!" exclaimed the ruffian, as he caught sight of the story-teller. "What the deuce hindered you from bringing your blessed carcass here a little sooner?"

"He was spinning a yarn with Germain when I found him," answered Nicolas, helping himself to a large slice of the ham.

"Ho! ho!" cried the Skeleton, gazing earnestly on Pique-Vinaigre, without, however, diminishing the ardour with which he devoured the provisions; "so you were gossiping with Germain, were you?"

"Yes, I was," returned Pique-Vinaigre. "But what a fool that Germain is! I used to think that he was a sort of spy in the yard; but, lord love you, he is too much of a simpleton for that!"

"Oh, you think so, do you?" said the Skeleton, exchanging a rapid and significant glance with Nicolas and Barbillon.

"I'm as sure of it as I am that I see a capital ham before me. Besides, how the devil can he be a spy when he is always by himself? He speaks to no one, and nobody ever changes a word with him; and you all know that he runs from us as if we carried the plague in our pockets. Now, how a man can tell many tales who acts as he does, is more than I can conceive. However, spy or not, he will not be able to do us much more harm, as to-morrow he will obtain a room for himself."

"The deuce he will!" replied the Skeleton. Then taking advantage of a conversation which had commenced between Barbillon and Pique-

Vinaigre, he leaned towards Nicolas and said whisperingly, "You see, we have not an instant to lose. After four o'clock to-day all chance of serving him out is over: it is now nearly three. You see, unfortunately, he does not sleep in my dormitory, or I would settle him in the night; and to-morrow he will be out of our reach."

"Well, I don't care!" answered Nicolas, as though replying to some observation of his companions; "I say—and I'll stick to it—Germain always seems to look down upon us as though we were not as good as he."

"No, no!" interposed Pique-Vinaigre; "you are quite wrong as regards this young man—you are, indeed. You frighten him—you do; and I know that he considers himself not fit to hold a candle to you. Why, if you only knew what he was saying to me just now——"

"Let's hear what it was!"

"'Why,' says he, 'you are a lucky fellow, Pique-Vinaigre, you are,' he says, 'to take the liberty of speaking to the celebrated Skeleton (that was the very word he used) just for all the world as if you was his equal! But whenever I meet him,' he says, 'I feel myself overcome with so much awe and respect, that though I would give my eyes out of my head to know him and converse with him, I no more dare do it that I should make bold to accost the *préfet de police* if he were in his chair of office, and me beholding him body and bones.'"

"He said that, did he?" returned the Skeleton, feigning to believe the well-meant fiction of Pique-Vinaigre, as well as to feel gratified by the deep admiration he was reported to have excited in the breast of Germain.

"As true as that you are the cleverest ruffian upon earth, he said those very words; and, more than that, he——"

"Oh, then, if that is the case," said the Skeleton, "I shall make it up with him. Barbillon wanted to pick a quarrel with him, but I shall advise him to be quiet."

"That's right!" exclaimed Pique-Vinaigre, fully persuaded that he had effectually diverted from Germain the danger that threatened him; "that would be much the best way! For this poor chicken-hearted fellow would never quarrel—simply because, like me, he has not pluck enough to fight; therefore it is no use getting into a dispute."

"Still," cried the Skeleton, "I am sorry, too, that we shall not have our fun; we had quite reckoned upon getting up a fight with Germain to amuse us after dinner. I don't know now what we shall do to kill the time."

"Ah, to be sure!" chimed in Nicolas. "What the deuce shall we do with ourselves? Can any body tell me?"

"Well, then, I'll settle it!" said Barbillon. "Since you seem to recommend my leaving Germain alone, I'll agree to do so, on condition that Pique-Vinaigre tells us one of his best stories."

"Done!" exclaimed the story-teller. "But I must make one condition as well as you, and, without both are agreed to, I don't open my lips."

"Well, then, say what your other condition is. I dare say it is not more difficult than the former, and we soon agreed about that."

"It is that this honourable company, which is overstocked with riches," said Pique-Vinaigre, resuming his old tone when addressing his audiences

preparatory to commencing his juggling tricks, "will have the trifling kindness to club together and present me with the small sum of twenty sous—a mere trifle, gents, when you are about to listen to the celebrated Pique-Vinaigre, who has had the honour of appearing before the most celebrated *prigs* of the day—he who is now expected at Brest or Toulon, by the especial command of his majesty's government."

"Well, then, we'll stand the twenty sous after you have finished your story."

"After?—no—before!" said Pique-Vinaigre.

"What! do you suppose us capable of *doing* you out of twenty sous?" asked the Skeleton, with an air of disdain.

"By no means!" replied Pique-Vinaigre. "I honour the 'stone-jug' with my confidence, and it is in order to economise its purse that I ask for twenty sous in advance."

"On your word and honour?"

"Yes, gentlemen; for, after my story, you will be so satisfied, that it is not twenty sous but twenty francs—a hundred francs—you will force me to take! I know that I should be shabby enough to accept them; and thus, you see, it is from consideration, and you will do wisely to give me twenty sous in advance."

"You don't want for the gift of the gab!"

"I have nothing but my tongue, and I must make use of that. And then—if it must be told—my sister and her children are in terrible distress, and, in a small house, even twenty sous is a consideration."

"Then why doesn't your sister *prig*, and her *kids*, too, if they're old enough?" asked Nicolas.

"Don't ask me; it distresses—dishonours me! I am too kind——"

"What do you mean, you fool? Why, you encourage her!"

"True; I encourage her in the vice of being honest, and that is the only line in which she shines. But come, it is agreed that I shall tell you my famous story of *Gringalet and Cut-in-Half*. But you must hand out twenty sous, and Barbillon shall not pick a quarrel with this simpleton of a Germain!"

"Well, you shall have twenty sous, and Barbillon shall not pick a quarrel with that simpleton of a Germain," said the Skeleton.

"Then open your ears, and you will hear what you will hear! But it is raining, which will make the customers tumble in, and there will be no occasion to go out and seek them."

And the rain began to fall, and the prisoners, quitting the yard, took refuge in the day-room, the turnkey being still in attendance.

We have said that this room was large and long, with a pavement, and lighted by three windows, which looked out into the yard. In the centre was the stone, near which were the Skeleton, Barbillon, Nicolas, and Pique-Vinaigre. At a signal from the *prévôt*, the Gros-Boiteux joined this group. Germain was one of the last to enter, absorbed in most delightful thoughts, and he went mechanically to seat himself on the ledge at the lowest window in the apartment, a place he usually occupied, and which no one disputed with him, for it was at a distance from the stone round which the prisoners were assembled.

We have already said that some fifteen of the prisoners had been informed in the first instance of the treachery attributed to Germain, and the murder which was to avenge it. But, soon whispered to one another, the plan comprised as many adherents as there were prisoners; these ruffians, in their blind cruelty, considering this fearful plot as legitimate revenge, and viewing therein a certain guarantee against the future disclosure of *spies*. Germain, Pique-Vinaigre, and the turnkey, were alone ignorant of what was about to take place. General attention was divided between the executioner, the victim, and the story-teller, who was about innocently to deprive Germain of the only succour he could hope for; for it is nearly sure that the turnkey, when he saw the prisoners attentive to the story of Pique-Vinaigre, would think his surveillance useless, and take advantage of that moment of tranquillity to go and take his meal. And when the prisoners had entered, the Skeleton said to the turnkey,—

"Old fellow, Pique-Vinaigre has a capital idea; he is going to tell us his story of *Gringalet and Cut-in-Half*. It is weather in which one would not put a policeman out of doors, and we shall quietly wait in till it is time to go to roost."

"Why, you are always pretty quiet when he begins his talk, and have no need for me to be at your heels."

"Yes," said the Skeleton; "but Pique-Vinaigre asks a high price—he wants twenty sous for his story."

"Yes, the trifle of twenty sous—a mere nothing!" cried Pique-Vinaigre. "Yes, gents, nothing; for who that had a liard would not bestow it to hear the adventures of poor little *Gringalet*, *Cut-in-Half*, and

the wicked *Gargousse?* It will rend your hearts, and make your hair stand on end! And, gents, who is there that would not dispose of the paltry sum of four liards—or, if you prefer counting my mites, of five centimes—to have their hearts rent and their hair standing on end?"

"There are two sous," said the Skeleton, throwing down the piece of money before Pique-Vinaigre. "Come, is the 'stone-jug' too niggardly to enjoy this pastime?" he added, looking at his accomplices with a significant air.

Several sous fell around him, to the great joy of Pique-Vinaigre, who thought of his sister as he collected the money.

"Eight — nine — ten — eleven — twelve — thirteen!" he said, as he picked up the money. "Now, my rich friends, my capitalists, and others of the cash interest, try once more. You cannot stop at thirteen, for it is an unlucky number! Only seven sous deficient, the trifle of seven

sous! What, gents, shall it be said that the Fosse aux Lions could not produce seven sous—seven miserable sous? Oh, gents, gents, you would make me believe that you have been brought here very unjustly, or that you have all had a sad run of ill-luck."

The shrill voice and broad jests of Pique-Vinaigre had brought Germain from his reverie, and as much to follow Rigolette's advice and make himself popular with the prisoners, as to give a trifle to the poor devil who had testified some desire to be of service to him, he rose and threw a piece of ten sous at the tale-teller's feet, who exclaimed, as he pointed at his generous benefactor,—

"Ten sous, gents! You see, I was speaking of capitalists! Honour to that gentleman!—he behaves like one of the monied interest, as an ambassador to be agreeable to the company! Yes, gents; for it is to him that you will owe the greater portion of *Gringalet and Cut-in-Half*, and

you will thank him for it. As to the three sous over, why, I shall earn them by imitating the voices of the personages, instead of speaking like you and me. That will be another obligation you will owe to this wealthy capitalist, whom you ought to adore."

"Come, no more blarney, but begin!" said the Skeleton.

"One moment, gents!" said Pique-Vinaigre. "It is but right that the capitalist who has given me ten sous should be the best situated, except our *prévôt*, who has first choice."

This proposal squared so well with the Skeleton's project that he exclaimed,—

"True; after me he ought to be best placed!" And again he looked significantly at the prisoners.

"Yes, yes; let him come nearer," said the prisoners.

"Let him sit on the front bench."

"You see, young man, your liberality is recompensed; the honourable company sees that you have a right to the front seat," said Pique-Vinaigre to Germain.

Believing that his liberality had really better disposed his hateful companions in his favour, and delighted thus to follow up Rigolette's earnest desires, Germain, in spite of considerable repugnance, left the place of his choice, and went towards the story-teller, who, having arranged four or five benches round the stone, by the aid of Nicolas and Barbillon, said, with emphasis,—

"Here are the dress-boxes. All respect to the worthy—the capitalist first."

"Now, then, let those who have paid take their seats," added Pique-Vinaigre gaily, firmly believing that, thanks to himself, Germain had nothing now to fear. "And those who have not paid," he added, "will sit down or stand up which they please."

Let us sum up the arrangement of this scene. Pique-Vinaigre was standing up near the stone ready to commence; near him was the Skeleton, also standing up, and, with his eyes intently fixed on Germain, ready to rush upon him the moment the turnkey left the cell. At some distance from Germain, Nicolas, Barbillon, Cardillac, and other prisoners, amongst whom was the man with the blue cotton nightcap and grey blouse, occupying the remoter benches. The majority of prisoners grouped here and there, some sitting on the ground, others standing and leaning against the wall, composed the secondary figures of this picture, lighted, *à la Rembrandt*, by three lateral windows, which threw strong light and deep shadows on forms so variously characterised and so strongly marked. The turnkey, whose departure was to be, unknown to himself, the signal for Germain's murder, kept close to the door, which was ajar.

"Are we all ready?" asked Pique-Vinaigre of the Skeleton.

"Silence in the 'stone-jug!' said the latter, turning half round; and then addressing Pique-Vinaigre, "Now, begin; we are all attention!"

CHAPTER L.

GRINGALET AND CUT-IN-HALF.

Pique-Vinaigre began his recital thus, in the midst of the profound silence of his auditory :—

"It is no inconsiderable time ago that the story occurred which I am about to relate to this honourable company. What was called *La Petite*

Pologne was not then destroyed. The honourable society knows (or does not know) what was called La Petite Pologne?"

"Well enough!" said the prisoner in the blue cap; "they were some small houses near the Rue du Rocher and the Rue de la Pépinière?"

"Exactly so, my dear sir," replied Pique-Vinaigre; "and the Quartier of the Cité, which, at the same time, does not consist of palaces, would be in comparison to La Petite Pologne the Rue de la Paix or the Rue de Rivoli. What a *rookery!* but, at the same time, very convenient for gents in our line. There were no streets but narrow alleys, no houses but ruins, no pavement but a small carpet of mud and dungheaps, which would have destroyed all the noise of wheels,—that is, supposing any carriages passed by that way; but none did! From morn till night, and, particularly, from night till morn, there were only heard cries of '*Watch! watch!—help! murder!*' but the watch took no notice. The more persons were knocked on the head in La Petite Pologne, the fewer persons there were to apprehend. You should have seen the respectable inhabitants who lived there! There were very few jewellers, goldsmiths, and bankers; but then, on the other hand, there were quantities of organ-grinders, puppet-showmen, punches, and showers of remarkable animals. Amongst the latter was one well known as *Cut-in-Half!*—he was so

cruel, and especially to children. He acquired this name because it was reported that he had cut a small Savoyard in two with a blow of his hatchet."

At this moment the prison clock struck a quarter past three o'clock. The prisoners being made to return to their cells at four o'clock, the Skeleton's murderous design must be carried into execution before that hour.

"*Mille tonnerres!* the turnkey won't go!" he said, in a low tone, to Gros-Boiteux.

"Be easy! he'll go when once the story is begun."

Pique-Vinaigre continued:—"No one knew where Cut-in-Half came from. Some said he was an Italian, others a Bohemian, others a Turk, others an African; the gossips called him a magician, although a magician in our times would be something to look at. What made them believe this was, that he always had with him a large red monkey called *Gargousse*, and who was so cunning and savage that he seemed as if possessed by the devil. I shall mention this beauty again presently; as to Cut-in-Half, I shall soon describe him. His complexion was like the old tops of a pair of jockey-boots, his hair as red as the hair of his monkey, his eyes green, and (what made the women think he was a conjuror) he had a black tongue."

"A black tongue!" exclaimed Barbillon.

"Black as ink!" replied Pique-Vinaigre.

"And how did that happen?"

"Because, no doubt, when his mother was in the family-way she had, perhaps, talked of a negro," said Pique-Vinaigre, with modest assurance. "To these attractions Cut-in-Half joined the profession of having a multitude of tortoises, monkeys, guinea-pigs, white mice, foxes, and marmosettes, corresponding to an equivalent total of Savoyards and forsaken children. Every morning he distributed his animal to each, and a morsel of black bread, and then despatched them to beg for '*Only one ha'penny!*' or dance the *Catarina*. Those who only brought in at night fifteen sous were beaten, soundly beaten, so that their shrieks might be heard from one end of La Petite Pologne to the other. I should also say that there was in La Petite Pologne a man called *Le Doyen* (the Dean), because he was the 'oldest inhabitant,' and, as it were, mayor, provost, magistrate, for it was in his room (he kept a Tom and Jerry shop) that all went when they could not otherwise decide their quarrels. Although rather aged, yet Le Doyen was as strong as Hercules, and very generally feared. They swore by him in La Petite Pologne; and when he said 'Very good!' all the world said 'very good!' When he said 'That's bad!' all the world said 'that's bad!' He was a good fellow at bottom, but very fierce, particularly when the strong misused the weak—then look out for squalls! As he was Cut-in-Half's nearest neighbour, he had heard the children cry very frequently from the blows which the shower of beasts gave them. He had said to him, 'If I hear the children cry, I will make you cry in your turn; and, as you have the stronger voice, I will give you the severer beating.'"

"Well done, Le Doyen! I like Le Doyen!" said the prisoner in the blue nightcap.

"So do I!" added the turnkey, as he approached the group.

The Skeleton could not repress a movement of angry impatience.

Pique-Vinaigre proceeded:—"Thanks to Le Doyen, who had threatened Cut-in-Half, the cries of the children were heard no more in the night-time in La Petite Pologne; but the poor, unhappy little fellows did not suffer the less, for if they cried no longer when their master beat them, it was because they were afraid of being more cruelly beaten. As to complaining to Le Doyen, they had no idea of that. For the fifteen sous which each little fellow was obliged to bring in, Cut-in-Half lodged, boarded, and clothed them. In the evening a bit of black bread, as at breakfast, this was their food. He never gave them clothes—that was the way he clothed them; and he shut them up at night with their animals, on the same straw in a garret, to which they mounted by a ladder and a trap—this was the lodging. When once all had ascended, and the tail of children and animals was complete, he took away the ladder and locked the trap. You may judge of the life and row which these monkeys, guinea-pigs, foxes, mice, tortoises, marmosettes, and children, made all in the dark in this cock-loft, which was as big as a barn. Cut-in-Half slept in a room underneath, with his great ape, Gargousse, fastened to the foot of his bed. When the brute growled, because there was too much noise in the loft, the beast-shower went up the ladder without any light, and going into the loft, laid about him right and left with a heavy whip, without seeing or counting his blows. As there were always some fifteen children, and some of the poor dears brought him in twenty sous a-day, Cut-in-Half having defrayed all his outlay, which was by no means excessive, had left for himself some four or five francs a-day, with which he enjoyed himself, for, it must be told, that he was one of the greatest tipplers that ever lived, and was regularly blind drunk once a-day. That was his rule; and he declared that, but for that, he should have the headach every day. We should add, that out of his gains he used to buy some sheeps' hearts for Gargousse, who ate raw flesh like a cannibal. But I see the honourable society are anxious to be introduced to Gringalet! Here he is, gents!"

"Let's have Gringalet, and I'll go and eat my soup," said the turnkey.

The Skeleton exchanged a look of savage satisfaction with the Gros-Boiteux.

"Amongst the children to whom Cut-in-Half distributed his animals," continued Pique-Vinaigre, "was a poor little devil named Gringalet. Without father or mother, brother or sister, without fire, food, or shelter, he was alone in the world—quite alone in a world which he had not asked to enter, and which he might leave without attracting any one's attention. He was not called Gringalet for any pleasure he had in the name, for he was meagre, lean, and pallid; he did not look above seven or eight years old, but was really thirteen. If he did not seem more than half his name, it was not because of his own will, but because he only fed perhaps every other day, and then so scantily, so poorly, that it was really an exertion to make him pass for seven years old."

"Poor little brat! I think I see him!" said the prisoner in the blue cotton nightcap; "there are so many children like him on the streets of Paris dying of hunger!"

"They must begin to learn that way of living very young in order to get accustomed to it," said Pique-Vinaigre, with a bitter smile.

"Come, get on!" said the Skeleton, suddenly; "the turnkey is getting impatient—his soup is getting cold."

"Oh, never mind that!" said the *surveillant*. "I wish to know something more of Gringalet; it is very amusing!"

"Yes, it is really very interesting!" added Germain, who was very attentive to the story.

"Ah, thank ye for saying that, my capitalist," said Pique-Vinaigre; "that gives me more satisfaction than your ten-sous' piece."

"*Tonnerre!*" exclaimed the Skeleton, "will you have done with your delays?"

"Well, then," replied Pique-Vinaigre, "one day Cut-in-Half had picked up Gringalet in the streets, dying with cold and hunger: perhaps it would

Gringalet.

have been best, if he had let him die. As Gringalet was weak, he was a coward; as he was a coward, he became the jest and sport of the other lads, who beat him and used him so ill that he would have become wicked, if he had not been deficient in strength and courage. But no; when he had been heartily thumped, he cried, and said, 'I have not done any harm to any body, and every body is unkind to me,—that's very cruel: oh, if I were strong and bold!' You will, perhaps, imagine that Gringalet was about to add, 'I would return to others the ill they do to me?' By no means: he said, 'Oh, if I were strong and bold, I would defend the weak against the strong, for I am weak, and the strong have made me suffer!' In the meanwhile, as he was too small a boy to prevent the strong from ill-using the weak, beginning with himself, he prevented the larger brutes from eating the smaller ones."

"What a strange idea!" said the prisoner in the blue cap.

"And, what is stranger still," said the tale-teller, "it was this idea that consoled Gringalet for being beaten; which proves that his heart was not bad at bottom."

"*Pardieu!* quite the contrary," said the guardian. "What an amusing devil that Pique-Vinaigre is!"

At this instant the chimes went half-past three o'clock. The Skeleton and Gros-Boiteux exchanged significant glances: the time was drawing on, and the *surveillant* did not go; and some of the less hardened prisoners seemed almost to forget the sinister projects of the Skeleton against Germain, as they listened attentively to Pique-Vinaigre's recital.

"When I say," he continued, "that Gringalet prevented the larger brutes from eating the smaller, you must understand that Gringalet did not mix himself up with tigers, and lions, and wolves, or even foxes and monkeys, in the menagerie of Cut-in-Half,—he was too much of a coward for that; but if he saw, for instance, a spider hidden in his web, in wait for a poor foolish fly flying gaily in the sunshine of the good God, without hurting any one, why, in a moment, Gringalet smashed the web, freed the fly, and did for the spider like a regular Cæsar,—a real Cæsar; for he turned as white as a sheet in touching such nasty reptiles; and then it required resolution in him, who was afraid of a cockchafer, and had been a long while in forming an intimacy with the tortoise which Cut-in-Half handed to him every morning. Thus Gringalet, overcoming the fear which the spider caused him, in order to prevent flies from being eaten, proved himself——"

"As plucky in his way as a man who attacks a wolf to take a lamb from his jaws," said the prisoner in the blue cap.

"Or a man who would have attacked Cut-in-Half to take Gringalet from his clutches," added Barbillon, who was deeply interested.

"As you say," continued Pique-Vinaigre; "so that after one of these onslaughts Gringalet did not feel himself so unhappy. He who never laughed, smiled, looked about him, cocked his cap on one side (when he had one), and hummed the 'Marseillaise' with the air of a conqueror. At this moment, there was not a spider that dared to look him in the face. Another time it was a grashopper which was swimming and struggling in a brook: in a moment, Gringalet put his two fingers boldly in the water and rescued the grashopper, which he put on the grass. A

first-class swimmer, who had fished up his tenth drowning man at fifty francs a-head could not have been prouder than Gringalet when he saw his grashopper bend his legs and jump away. And yet the grashopper gave him neither money nor medal, nor uttered any more thanks than did the fly. But then, Pique-Vinaigre, worthy friend, the honourable company will say to me, what the devil pleasure could Gringalet, whom all the world thumped and buffeted, find in freeing grashoppers and destroying spiders? Since people were unkind to him, why did he not take his revenge by doing all the evil in his power? For instance, in giving spiders flies to eat, leaving grashoppers to drown, or even drowning them on purpose?"

"Yes, why not? Why did he not revenge himself in that way?" asked Nicolas.

"What good would that have been?" inquired another.

"Why, to do ill, as ill was done to him."

"No! Well, then, I understand he liked to save the flies, poor little chap!" said the man in a blue cap. "He said perhaps, 'Who knows if some day they mayn't save me in the same way?'"

"My right worthy friend is right," cried Pique-Vinaigre, "and has read in his heart what I was about to narrate to the honourable assembly. Gringalet was not wicked; he did not see beyond the end of his nose; but he said, 'Cut-in-Half is my spider, and perhaps some day some one will do for me what I do for the other poor little flies—break his web and take me from his clutches;' for till then nothing could have induced him to run away from his master; he would as soon have thought of killing himself. However, one day, when neither he nor his tortoise had had a chance, and had not gained between either of them more than three sous, Cut-in-Half beat the poor child very severely, so severely, that, *ma foi!* Gringalet could not stand it any longer; and, tired of being the butt and martyr of every body, he watched a moment when the trap was open, and, whilst Cut-in-Half was feeding his animals, he slid down the ladder."

"Oh, so much the better," said a prisoner.

"But why didn't he go and complain to the *doyen?*" inquired the blue cap; "he would have served Cut-in-Half out."

"Yes, but he dared not; he was too much afraid, and preferred trying to escape. Unfortunately, Cut-in-Half had seen him, and, seizing him by the wrist, lugged him up again into the loft. Poor Gringalet, thinking of what must befal him, shuddered all over, although he was by no means at the end of his troubles. *Apropos* of Gringalet's troubles, I must now mention to you Gargousse, the large and favourite ape of Cut-in-Half. This mischievous brute was, *ma foi!* taller than Gringalet; only imagine what a size for a monkey! I must tell you why he was never taken into the streets to be shewn, like the other animals of the menagerie: it was because Gargousse was so wicked and powerful, that there was not one amongst all the show boys, except an Auvergnat of fourteen, a determined chap, who, after many skirmishes and contests with Gargousse, had mastered him, and could lead him about with a chain; and even with him Gargousse frequently got up some fights, which ended in bloodshed produced by Gargousse's bites. Enraged at this, the little Auvergnat said, one fine day, 'Very well, I will revenge myself on this infernal monkey;'

and so, one morning, having gone out with the brute as usual, he, in order to appease its savageness, bought a sheep's heart. Whilst Gargousse was eating it, he put a rope through the end of his chain, tied it to a tree, and, when he had got the brute quite at his mercy, he gave it an outrageous walloping."

"Well done! Bravo the Auvergnat! Go it, my lad!—Skin the beast alive!" said the prisoners.

"He did whack him gloriously!" continued Pique-Vinaigre. "And you should have seen how Gargousse cried, ground his teeth, leaped, danced, and skipped hither and thither; but the Auvergnat used his stick famously! Unfortunately, monkeys, like cats, are very tenacious of life. Gargousse was as crafty as he was vicious; and when he saw, as they say, how the wood was on fire, at a heavy blow he made a final bound, and fell flat at the foot of the tree, shook for a moment, and then shammed dead, lying as motionless as a log. The Auvergnat believed he had done for him, and thinking the ape dead, he cut away, resolved never again to return to Cut-in-Half. But the beast Gargousse watched him out of the corner of his eye, and, bruised and wounded as he was, as soon as he saw himself alone he rent the cord asunder with his teeth. The Boulevard Monceaux, where he had had this hiding, was close to La Petite Pologne, and the monkey knew his way as easy as his paternoster; and, making off in that direction, arrived at his master's, who roared and foamed when he saw how his monkey had been served. This is not all. From this moment Gargousse entertained such a furious revenge against all children, that Cut-in-Half, who was not the tenderest soul alive, dared not

trust him to any one for fear of an accident; for Gargousse was capable of strangling or devouring a child, and all the little brute-showers knowing that, would rather be thrashed by Cut-in-Half than go near the monkey."

"I must really go and eat my soup," said the turnkey, turning towards the door; "this devil of a Pique-Vinaigre would wheedle a bird down from a tree to hear him! I can't tell where the deuce he fishes up all he tells!"

"Now, then, the turnkey will go," said the Skeleton, in a whisper to the Gros-Boiteux. "I'm in such a rage I shake all over! Mind and form a wall all round the *informer*—I will take care of the rest!"

"Mind, now, and be good boys!" said the turnkey, turning towards the door.

"As good as images!" replied the Skeleton, coming closer to Germain, whilst the Gros-Boiteux and Nicolas, after having agreed on a signal, made two steps in the same direction.

"Ah, worthy turnkey, you are going at the most interesting moment!" said Pique-Vinaigre, with an air of reproach.

Had it not been for the Gros-Boiteux, who anticipated his intention, and seized him suddenly by the arm, the Skeleton would have rushed on Pique-Vinaigre.

"What! the most interesting moment?" replied the turnkey, turning towards the story-teller.

"Decidedly," said Pique-Vinaigre; "you do not know all you will lose—the most delightful portion of the history is now about to commence."

"Don't attend to him," exclaimed the Skeleton, who, with difficulty, repressed his rage; "he is not in good trim to-day: for my part I think his story very stupid."

"My story very stupid?" cried Pique-Vinaigre, wounded in his pride as a tale-teller. "Well, turnkey, I beg of you—I entreat you to remain till the conclusion, which, at most, will not be longer than a quarter of an hour, and as by this time your soup must be cold, why you haven't much to lose by a little delay. I will go a-head with my narrative, so that you may still have time to eat your soup before we are locked up for the night."

"Well, then, I'll stay, but make haste," said the turnkey, coming closer towards him.

"You are wise to stay, turnkey," continued Pique-Vinaigre; "without bragging, you never heard any thing like it before, especially the *finale*, which is the triumph of the ape, and Gringalet escorted in procession by all the little beast-showers and inhabitants of La Petite Pologne. On my word and honour, it is not for the sake of boasting, but it is really superb."

"Then tell it speedily, my boy," said the turnkey, returning towards the stove.

The Skeleton shook with rage. He almost despaired of accomplishing his crime. If bedtime arrived, Germain must escape, for he was not in the same dormitory with his implacable enemy, and on the following day Germain was to be in a separate cell.

"So it's very stupid!" continued Pique-Vinaigre; "well, the honourable company shall be the judge of that. There could not exist a more

vicious brute than the big ape Gargousse, who was even more savage with children than his master. What does Cut-in-Half do to punish Gringalet for trying to run away? You shall know by and by. Well, in the meantime, he seizes on the unhappy child, and locks him into the cock-loft for the night, saying, 'To-morrow morning, when all your companions are gone out, I will let you see what I do with vagabonds who try to run away from me.' You may imagine what a wretched night Gringalet passed. He did not close an eye, but kept asking himself

what Cut-in-Half meant to do with him, and then he fell asleep. He had a dream—such a horrid dream—that is, the beginning of it was, as you shall see. He dreamed that he was one of the very poor flies that he had so often rescued from the spiders' webs, and that he had fallen into a large and strong web, where he was struggling—struggling with all his might, without being able to escape. He then saw coming towards him, stealthily and treacherously, a kind of monster, which looked like Cut-in-Half turned into a spider. Poor Gringalet began to struggle again, as you may suppose, but the more he struggled the more he got entangled, like the poor flies. At last the spider came up to him, touched him, and he felt the cold and hairy paws of the horrid beast curl round him and inclose him, intending to devour him. He believed he was dead, when suddenly he heard a kind of clear, ringing, sharp sort of buzzing, and he saw a beautiful golden fly, with a kind of brilliant dart, like a diamond needle, which flew round the spider with a furious air, and a voice (when I say a voice you must imagine a fly's voice) which said, '*Poor little fly!—you have saved flies!—the spider shall not*——' Unfortunately Grin-

galet jumped up at this moment, and did not see the end of his dream; but yet he was at first somewhat assured, and said to himself, 'Perhaps the golden fly with the diamond dart would have killed the spider if I had finished the dream.' But in vain did Gringalet endeavour to make himself easy and take comfort; in proportion as the night ended, his fears renewed, so strongly, that at last he forgot his dream, or, rather, he only remembered the portion which affrighted him, the large web in which he had been caught and enfolded by the spider which resembled Cut-in-Half. You may imagine what a fright he was in; only think—only think—alone—quite alone, and no one to defend him! In the morning, when he saw day-break gradually appear through the sky-light of the cock-loft, his fears redoubled, and the moment was at hand when he would be alone with Cut-in-Half. He then threw himself on his knees in the middle of the garret, and, weeping bitterly, entreated his comrades to ask Cut-in-Half to forgive him, or else to help him to escape if possible. But some from fear of their master, others from disregard, and some from ill nature, refused what poor Gringalet requested so earnestly."

"Young scamps!" said the prisoner in the blue cap; "he is to be pitied, so helpless. If he could have defended himself, tooth and nail, it would have been very different, *ma foi!* If you have fangs, shew 'em, boy, and defend your tail!"

"To be sure!" said several prisoners.

"Holloa, there!" exclaimed the Skeleton, unable to conceal his rage, and addressing the Blue Cap; "won't you hold your jaw?—didn't I say silence in the *stone jug?*—am I captain of the ward or not?"

The Blue Cap's answer was to look the Skeleton full in the face, and then make that low-lifed gesture of the blackguards, which consists in applying the thumb of the right hand to the end of the nose, opening the fingers like a fan, and putting the little finger on the thumb of the left hand, similarly extended. He accompanied this mute *reply* with so odd

a look that many of the prisoners laughed heartily, whilst others, on the contrary, were actually stupified at the audacity of the new prisoner, so greatly was the Skeleton feared. The latter shook his fist at the new prisoner, and said to him, grinding his teeth,—

"We'll settle this to-morrow!"

"I'll make the calculation on your *nob!*—I'll put down seventeen and carry nothing!"

For fear the turnkey should have fresh motive for staying, in order to repress any row, the Skeleton quietly replied,—

"That is not what I mean; I am the captain of this room, and ought to be attended to,—ought not I, turnkey?"

"Certainly," replied the superintendant; "no interruption; and go on, Pique-Vinaigre, and make haste, will you, my lad?"

"Then," resumed Pique-Vinaigre, "Gringalet, seeing how all the world forsook him, resigned himself to his miserable fate. It was broad day, and all the boys were going out with their animals. Cut-in-Half opened the trap, and called each to give him his morsel of bread. They all descended the ladder, and Gringalet, more dead than alive, squeezed up in a corner of the cock-loft with his tortoise, did not move, but watched his companions as they descended one after the other, and would have given every thing he had to have done as they did. At length the last quitted the loft, and then his heart beat quick as he thought his master might forget him. But Cut-in-Half, who was standing at the foot of the ladder, exclaimed in a loud voice, 'Gringalet! Gringalet!' 'Here I am, master.' 'Come down directly, or I'll fetch you!' added Cut-in-Half; and Gringalet believed his last hour was come. 'Oh!' said he to himself, as he trembled in all his limbs, and recollected his dream, 'you are in the web, little fly, the spider is going to eat you!' After having put his tortoise quietly down on the ground, he said farewell to it, for he had become fond of the creature, and went to the trap, and had put his leg on the ladder to go down, when Cut-in-Half, taking hold of his miserable little leg, as thin as a stick, pulled him down so suddenly, that Gringalet lost his hold, and fell with his face all down the rounds of the ladder."

"What a pity it was that the Doyen of La Petite Pologne was not there at that moment!—what a dance he could have played to Cut-in-Half!" said the blue night-cap; "it is at such moments as these that a man is always happy and contented to feel how useful it is sometimes to be strong."

"That's all right, my lad, but, unfortunately, the Doyen was not there, so Cut-in-Half seized hold of the child by the waistband of his little breeches, and carried him to his own hole of a chamber, where the huge monkey was kept fastened to the foot of his bed. Directly the spiteful beast saw the boy he began to jump and spring about, grinding his teeth like a mad thing, and darting towards Gringalet as near as his chain permitted him, as though he meant to devour him.

"Poor Gringalet! how ever will he be able to escape?—if that beast of a monkey once gets hold of him he is safe to strangle to him! I declare," exclaimed the man in the blue cap, "the very thoughts of a poor innocent child being in such a dangerous situation makes me shiver from head to

foot, and I seem as though I couldn't hurt a worm. How do you feel, good friends?"

"The very same!" replied a burst of voices,—"no more could we!"

At this moment the prison-clock chimed forth the first quarter past three, and the Skeleton becoming momentarily more and more apprehensive that the time would slip away without their being able to accomplish their design, and furious at the continued interruptions, as well as irritated at the evident sympathy and compassion awakened in the breasts of the prisoners by Pique-Vinaigre's recital, called out in angry voice,—

"Silence in the *stone jug*, I say! We shall never get to the end of this unlucky history if you persist in chiming in."

The buzz of voices died away at these words, and Pique-Vinaigre thus continued,—

"When it is recollected how much poor little Gringalet had had to endure before he could get used to his tortoise, and that even the boldest of his companions trembled and turned pale even at the mention of Gargousse's name, it may very easily be imagined what deadly terror he experienced when he found himself placed by his master within the reach of the horrible monkey. 'Oh, master! master!' he cried, as his teeth rattled and shook in his head, as though he were under the influence of an ague-fit, 'pray—pray forgive me!—pray have mercy on me!—I will never do so any more!—indeed! indeed! I never will! Oh! I promise you, master; only let me off this time, and I will never do so again!' But all these prayers and supplications escaped almost unconsciously from the poor child, who had, indeed, committed no fault that called for

such promises. Cut-in-Half, however, laughed at the boy's terrors, and, spite of the struggles and resistance of the unhappy child, he dragged him

within the grasp of Gargousse, who sprang upon him, and seized him with a savage grasp."

A cry of execration passed throughout the assembly, which had been listening with the profoundest attention to the progress of the tale.

"I should have been a rare fool had I gone away," said the officer on duty, as he drew nearer to the listening groups.

"Oh, but," said Pigue-Vinaigre, "you've heard nothing as yet—the best is still to come. Directly poor Gringalet felt the cold hairy paws of the ape seize him by the head and neck, he imagined it was with the intention of devouring him, and driven almost mad by his agony, he began shrieking and groaning in a manner that would have moved a stone to pity him, while he wildly exclaimed, 'Oh, send help!—send help from heaven, God of goodness and of little children! Oh, little golden fly, come and preserve me!—come, little fly, and save me from the horrible spider I dreamed about!' 'Will you hold your noise?' exclaimed Cut-in-Half, as he gave him several hard kicks, for he was fearful lest his cries should be heard; but in a minute's time there was no further danger of that, for the poor boy neither cried or struggled further, but pale and cold as marble, he remained kneeling, while the devilish monkey clawed, and scratched, and buffeted the trembling victim, who, closing his eyes, resigned himself to his fate. After Gargousse had tired himself with thus tormenting poor Gringalet, he suddenly paused, and looked up to his master's countenance, as though asking what he should do next. And really it seemed as though the ape and his master understood each other's thoughts, for Gargousse immediately renewed the attack, by plucking out handfuls of the shuddering boy's hair, upon which Cut-in-Half burst into fits of laughter, so long and so loud, that had poor Gringalet tried ever so hard he could not have made himself heard amid these wicked and malicious rejoicings. They had, however, the effect of encouraging Gargousse, who proceeded to attack the unfortunate child with redoubled fierceness."

"Ah, you beggar of a monkey!" exclaimed Blue Bonnet, "I only wish I had been near enough to catch hold of your tail! I'd have swung you round and round like a windmill, and finished by knocking out your dirty brains against the hardest stone I could find! That beastly ape was as cruel as if he had been a man!"

"Oh!" cried a simultaneous burst of voices, "no man ever was, or ever will be, so cruel as that, I'm sure!"

"Hallo!" interrupted Pique-Vinaigre, "you forget Cut-in-Half when you make that remark. However, just listen to what he did next. He unfastened the long chain, of Gargousse from the leg of his bed, round which it was generally secured, and tied it to the waist of the poor trembling child, who by this time was more dead than alive; so that the monkey and the boy were thus placed at the opposite ends of the chain."

"There was a devil's own invention! Ay, ay, it is quite certain that some human creatures are more cruel than the most savage wild beast!"

"When Cut-in-Half had completed this arrangement, he said to the monkey, who appeared to understand every word he said; and certainly these were such a precious pair it would have been a thousand pities they should have had any difficulty in the matter:—'Now, then,

Gargousse, attention! You have been exhibited with all your clever tricks, but it is now your turn to be showman. You shall be master, and Gringalet shall be monkey—yes, your monkey. So up with you, Gringalet, or I shall set Gargousse on you, and let him tear you to pieces!' The unhappy child, unable to utter a word, had again fallen on his knees, holding up his clasped hands in mute supplication, while the only sound he could utter proceeded from the convulsive rattling of his teeth. 'Make him stand upright, Gargousse!' said Cut-in-Half to his ape, 'and if he is obstinate do as I am doing;' and with these words he belaboured the child with a switch he held in his hand; then passing the stick to the monkey, he added, 'Make him stand up!—hit harder!—harder!' You all know what close imitators all monkeys are, but Gargousse was ever remarkable for his extreme quickness in copying the actions of others, he was not long, therefore, in bestowing so severe a flagellation on the shoulders of his terrified victim as soon compelled him to try at least to stand upon his feet, and once up, the unhappy child became as nearly as possible the same height as the ape. Then Cut-in-Half went out of the room, and descended the staircase, calling out to Gargousse to follow him, which he did, tugging violently at the end of the chain to which Gringalet was fastened, and compelling him to follow like a slave, at the same time beating him as hard as he could with his cane; and thus they reached the small court-yard belonging to the miserable tenement occupied by Cut-in-Half and his live stock. Now, then, Cut-in-Half reckoned on having good sport, so first securing the door that opened into the lane, he made signs to Gargousse to play Gringalet round and round the yard as fast as he could. The ape loved the fun as well as his master, and coursed the frightened boy round the yard, beating him with all the strength the switch admitted of, while Cut-in-Half laughed till his sides ached. Perhaps you may think this malicious nature was now satisfied—not a bit of it!—this was a mere beginning! So far Gringalet had merely endured excessive fright, been torn and scratched by the sharp teeth and claws of Gargousse, and severely beaten with the stick. This, however dreadful, was far from contenting Cut-in-Half's savage nature, he therefore devised another scheme, equally diabolical with his other proceedings. In order to enrage the monkey still more against the unhappy boy, who by this time was more dead than alive, he seized Gringalet by the hair of his head, and after feigning to overwhelm him with blows, he pushed him towards the monkey, saying, 'Tear him! worry him!' shewing Gargousse at the same time a great lump of sheep's heart, as much as to say, Do as I bid you, and here is your reward. And then began a fearful sight! Just imagine a huge red ape, with a black muzzle, grinding his teeth like a mad thing, and throwing himself, in a state of savage fury, on the poor helpless object of his cruelty, who, unable to defend himself, had no other means of preserving his face and eyes from being torn to pieces than by throwing himself down on the ground, flat on his face. Seeing this, Gargousse, wrought up by his master to a state of frenzied hatred against poor Gringalet, bestrode him as he lay on the ground, seized him by the neck, and bit him on the back of his head till the blood came. 'Oh, the spider!—the spider I dreamed of!' cried poor Gringalet, firmly believing now that

he should be devoured. All at once a noise was heard at the gate that opened from the lane into the yard. Knock! knock! knock!"

"Ha! ha!" exclaimed all the prisoners at once,—"how delightful! 'tis Le Doyen come to set the boy free! Oh, tell us if it was not!"

"Yes, my good friends, you have guessed right—it was Le Doyen, and he cried out, 'Now then, Cut-in-Half, will you open the door or no? Don't pretend to be deaf—I see you through the key-hole.' The exhibitor of beasts was obliged to answer, and went grumblingly along to open the gate for Le Doyen, who was a regular brick of a man, as strong and sturdy as a mountain for all his age, and, moreover, he was one of those persons with whose displeasure it was any thing but safe to trifle. 'Well, what do you want with me?' asked Cut-in-Half, half opening the yard-door. 'I have something to say to you,' answered Le Doyen,

entering almost forcibly into the little court-yard; then observing the savage conduct of the monkey, he ran towards him, seized him by the scuff of the neck, and sought to fling him to the other end of the yard, but perceiving that the boy and the animal were chained together, Le Doyen cast a stern and fearful glance on Cut-in-Half, as he called out in a severe tone, 'Let this unfortunate child loose directly!' Only conceive the joyful surprise experienced by Gringalet, who, nearly dead with terror, found himself so unexpectedly preserved, and by means which seemed to him so miraculous, that he could not help turning his eyes on his preserver, with a recollection of the golden-winged fly he had seen in his dream, though he saw merely a stout square-built elderly gentleman, looking more like a creature of earth than air."

"Well, now then," said the officer on duty,—"now that Gringalet is safe, I will go and take my soup."

"Safe!" exclaimed Pique-Vinaigre,—"not a bit of it! Bless you, poor little Gringalet has not got to the worst of his troubles yet."

"No?" cried several prisoners, with the deepest interest,—"no? hasn't he though?"

"But what else happened to him then?" inquired the officer.

"Wait a bit and you'll hear," answered the story-teller.

"What a fellow that Pique-Vinaigre is!" cried the officer; "he makes you do just as he pleases! Well, I'll stay a little longer at any rate!"

The Skeleton spoke not, but he actually foamed with rage, as Pique-Vinaigre thus continued his recital:—

"Cut-in-Half, who feared Le Doyen as the devil fears holy water, had, in a grumbling manner, unfastened the chain from Gringalet's waist, which done, Le Doyen tossed Gargousse up in the air, and when he fell to the ground he gave him so desperate a kick in his ribs that he sent him rolling ten feet off. The monkey screamed with passion, chattered, and ground his teeth with rage, then fearing a repetition of the rough usage he had experienced, scampered away, and climbing to the roof of a small shed, manifested his hatred of Le Doyen by a variety of threatening gestures. 'What do you mean by ill-using my monkey?' inquired Cut-in-Half of Le Doyen. 'You ought rather to ask me why I do not beat you instead of your spiteful beast there; for shame! thus to torture and ill use a poor helpless boy! Is it possible you can be drunk at this early hour of the morning?' 'I am no more drunk than you are! I was teaching my monkey a trick I wish him to learn—I want to get up a scene between Gringalet and my monkey. I attend to my business, and I only wish other people would do the same, and not trouble themselves with what does not concern them.' 'And I tell you that I have a right to interfere in the present case, and that it is my duty so to do. This morning when I missed Gringalet from among the other children who passed by my window, I inquired of them where he was; they did not make me any answer, but hung down their heads, and seemed confused. I know you, therefore suspected the boy was kept back for some bad purpose, and it seems I was not mistaken. Now, just listen to me; every day that I do not see Gringalet pass my door with the other lads, I will come here to know the reason, whether you

like it or not; and what's more, you shall produce him alive and well, or—or—or—I'll—I'll knock you down!' 'I shall do precisely as I please with the boy, without asking your leave,' answered Cut-in-Half, excessively irritated by this threat of keeping him under surveillance; 'you'll just please to keep your hands to yourself; and if you do not take yourself off, and if ever you presume to shew your face here again, I'll—I'll—' 'Take that, then, as an earnest of the future!' cried Le Doyen, interrupting Cut-in-Half by a couple of blows heavy enough to knock down a rhinoceros; 'you deserve that and more, too, for presuming to answer Le Doyen of La Petite Pologne in so impertinent a manner."

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord!" groaned forth the man in the blue cap,—"only *two* blows!—I wish I had had the handling of him—he should have had a round dozen to begin with, and afterwards I would have knocked all his teeth down his throat!"

"As far as strength went," continued Pique-Vinaigre, "Le Doyen could have killed and eaten a score of such fellows as the beast-master, so Cut-in-Half was compelled to pocket the affront. But he was not the less incensed at being struck in the presence of Gringalet, and well did he promise himself to be richly avenged for the indignity he had sustained; and an idea suddenly suggested itself to him, which could only have originated in the mind of a fiend of malice like himself. While he was meditating on his diabolical scheme, Le Doyen said, 'Bear in mind, that if you torment this poor boy any more, I will just make you and your menagerie turn out and quit La Petite Pologne, or I will bring the whole neighbourhood to pull your house about your ears. You know very well how universally you are hated already, and you may rest assured you will have such an escort to conduct you hence as shall leave you marks enough on your back to serve as a remembrancer of your parting, let you live as long as you may, that I promise you!' Like a treacherous, mean-spirited wretch as he was, Cut-in-Half, the better to effect his villanous design, instead of quarrelling further with Le Doyen, feigned to submit to his decision, and replied, in a false, wheedling tone, 'You were wrong to strike me, my worthy neighbour, or to imagine I had any intention of harming Gringalet; on the contrary, I tell you again I was merely teaching my monkey a new trick; he is rather awkward when he is put out in any way, and while trying to manage him, the boy got a few trifling bites, which I very much regret.' 'Humph!' said Le Doyen, casting a scrutinising look on him; 'now is this all gospel you are telling me? and why, if you only wished to teach a thing to your monkey, did you fasten him to Gringalet?' 'Because the boy has to learn the trick as well as the animal. Now this is what I want to do,—to dress up Gargousse in a red coat and a hat with a feather in it, like a barber, and then Gringalet is to sit in a little chair, with a cloth tucked under his chin, while the monkey affects to shave him with a large wooden razor.' The joke appeared so very droll to Le Doyen that he could not forbear laughing. 'Isn't that a funny idea?' inquired Cut-in-Half, in a crafty and malicious manner. 'Why, upon my word,' answered Le Doyen, 'it does strike me as a very amusing device, and one which, I doubt not, your monkey would carry into execution most admirably, that is if he be as clever and skilful in imi-

tation as he is represented.' 'Oh, bless you!' continued Cut-in-Half, 'when he has seen me for five or six times make believe to shave Gringalet, he will imitate me exactly with his large wooden razor; but for that purpose it is absolutely necessary he should become habituated to the boy, and that was my reason for fastening them both together.'

'But why did you select Gringalet more than any other of your boys?' 'Because he was the least among 'em, so that, you see, when he sat down the monkey was the taller of the two. To be sure I had another reason besides, M. le Doyen, although I know a man oughtn't to own such a thing as making a difference with his boys, but, for all that, I'll own the truth, whatever comes of it, and that is, that I made choice of this here little chap because I meant to give half the profits from the performance to whoever it was acted the scene with the animal, because I knew, in course, it was disagreeable.' 'Well,' said Le Doyen, completely gulled by this false and hypocritical manner of accounting for the conduct which had first attracted his displeasure,—'well, if such be the case, I can only say, I'm very sorry I gave you such a very hard thump; however, it does not matter, just consider it as 'paid on account,' so that ——' While Cut-in-Half was talking with Le Doyen, poor little Gringalet durst scarcely breathe—he trembled like an aspen leaf, and though dying with eagerness to throw himself at the feet of Le Doyen, and to supplicate of him to take him away from his cruel master, he had not courage to make the attempt, and in a low despairing voice he murmured to himself, 'I shall be like the poor fly I dreamed about, and the horrid spider will eat me up; it was folly of me to expect that

any golden fly would come to save me!' 'Come, my lad, since your master means to let you share his profits, you ought to try and get used to acting with the monkey; never mind being tied to him, he won't hurt you, I dare say, and then, you know, when you have earned a large sum of money by doing this trick with him, you will have nothing to complain of.' 'Complain, indeed!' exclaimed his master, giving him at the same time a side-look that froze poor Gringalet's blood, 'what should he know of complaining? Now then, speak up, and tell this worthy gentleman whether you ever have had any thing to complain of.' 'Come, let's hear all about it—have you any cause of complaint you are asked?' 'No—no—master,' stammered out the unhappy child. 'You hear what he says?' said Cut-in-Half, turning to Le Doyen,—'he never has had any thing to complain of. No! I should rather think not! Why, bless you, I was only thinking of his good when I tied him to the monkey, and if he has got a bit of a scratch from Gargousse, why I'll take care it does not happen again. The monkey is just a little awkward at first, but I'll see to it for the future—take my word for it, it won't happen again.' 'That's all right then, and now every body's satisfied, are they not?' 'Gringalet is, most especially; are you not, my fine fellow?' asked Cut-in-Half, casting a savage glance on the poor child. 'Yes—yes—master,' sobbed forth the wretched boy. 'And I'll tell you what I'll do further, to make up for the scratches you have got from the monkey, I'll let you share in a good breakfast I meant to order from our worthy Doyen's excellent larder; I intend having a dish of mutton-chops and pickles, four bottles of wine, and a pint of brandy.' 'Much obliged to you,' answered Le Doyen; 'all shall be sent as you desire. Few men have a better cellar or more tempting larder, and the contents of both are at the service of all who can pay for them.' Le Doyen was not a bad sort of a man, but it must be remembered that he had his living to get, and therefore, so that he disposed of his eatables and drinkables at a sufficient profit, he cared but little who it was in that case—friend or foe were quite alike to him. The beggar, Cut-in-Half, knew well enough where his weak side lay, so he hit upon this method of getting rid of him, in high good humour at having by his visit not only ascertained the safety of Gringalet, but also obtained a good order. And now was the unfortunate child thrown into the hands of his master, past all hopes of safety; for no sooner had Le Doyen turned his back than Cut-in-Half, pointing to the staircase with a dreadful frown, bade the trembling lad betake himself to his garret without loss of time; and the frightened child, glad at any rate to be freed from the monkey and his master, did not require a second bidding, but made off as fast as his strength permitted him. When Gringalet reached his own wretched chamber, he threw himself on the dirty straw allotted him for a bed beside his tortoise, and wept as though his heart were breaking. 'He will surely kill me!' cried the miserable boy, as he reflected on the cruelty of his master, and his own inability to escape from him. 'What shall I do? Oh, how I wish I were dead and in my grave!' Thus he remained sobbing and lamenting for more than an hour, when he was roused by hearing the coarse voice of Cut-in-Half calling upon him to descend. And the terror of the boy was still further increased by dis-

covering a considerable alteration in the rough tones of his master. 'Now then!' roared out the brutal man, with a torrent of oaths, 'are you coming down, or must I fetch you?' The unhappy child almost slid down the ladder in his haste to descend, but scarcely had he reached the bottom than Cut-in-Half seized hold of him, and dragged him to his own room, stumbling at every step he took; for the fellow had been drinking so hard that he could scarcely stand on his legs, while his body swung to and fro like the sails of a windmill. Almost bereft by extreme intoxication of the power of speech, he continued to gaze on the shrinking child with eyes full of dreadful meaning, though his tongue was unable to declare the murderous designs he meditated. Never had the poor boy endured such horror at the sight of his master. Gargousse was chained as usual to the foot of the bed, and in the middle of the room stood a chair, from the back of which hung a strong cord. 'S—s—it down—there!' cried the tyrant, as he pointed to the seat. Gringalet obeyed in silence, and Cut-in-Half, without another word, twisted the rope round him, and, finally, secured him in the chair so firmly, that even if poor Gringalet had dared to struggle, it would have been impossible for him to have extricated himself. 'Great and good God!' murmured the wretched child, 'this time no one will come to deliver me from my danger!' And the poor little fellow was right, for, indeed, it was utterly impossible, and for this reason, that no sooner had Le Doyen gone away with the idea of all being comfortably arranged between the boy and his master, than Cut-in-Half hastened to double-lock and bolt the entrance to his premises, so that no person could gain admission without his knowledge."

"Oh, poor little Gringalet!" exclaimed all the prisoners, deeply excited by the recital, "it's all up with him, that's quite sure."

"I'd give my last franc-piece to get him out of the hands of that blackguard—that I would!' cried a multitude of voices, as though one unanimous sympathy actuated each breast.

"I wonder what that beggar of a Cut-in-Half is going to do with the poor little chap!' added they, in almost breathless interest; "come, push on, and let's hear."

Pique-Vinaigre continued:—

"When Gringalet was well secured in the chair, his master said to him;" and here the narrator imitated most naturally the thick speech and stammering tones of a drunken man;—'Ah—you scoundrel!—you—you are the—cause of—my being thrashed by Le Doyen!—you shall—die—for it—you shall—you—young—devil!' Then he took from his pocket a freshly-sharpened razor, opened it, and seized Gringalet by the hair of his head. At the sight of the razor the child began to weep. 'Pardon, master!—pardon!—do not kill me!' 'Cry away, you infernal brat!—you shall not cry long!" replied Cut-in-Half. 'Golden fly!—golden fly!—come to my help!' exclaimed poor Gringalet, almost mad, and remembering the dream that had had such an effect upon him, 'for the spider is going to kill me!' 'What!—you call—call—me a spider—do you?' said Cut-in-Half; 'for this—and—other—many other things—you shall die—die, I tell you—but not by my hand—because that would'nt do—and besides—they'd *scrag* me—and so I'll say, and prove

that it was the ape. I have managed it all—and so—never mind—for that's all about it!' he added, preserving his equilibrium with the greatest difficulty. Then calling the monkey, which, at the end of his chain, was grinning and looking at his master and the boy,—'Here, Gargousse,' he

said, pointing to the razor, and then to Gringalet, whom he had seized by the hair of his head,—'do so to him;' and then drawing the back of the razor several times over Gringalet's throat, he feigned to cut his throat. The devil of a monkey was such a close imitator—so wicked and so sly—that he understood what his master desired, and as if to prove to him that he did so, he took his chin to his left paw, put his head back, and, with his right paw, pretended to cut his throat. 'That's it, Gargousse—that's it!" said Cut-in-Half, stammering, with his eyes half closed, and staggering so much that he almost fell with Gringalet and the chair. 'Yes, that's it!—I'll unfas—unfasten you, and you'll slice his weasand—

won't you, Gargousse?' The ape shrieked as he ground his teeth, as much as to say yes, and put out his paw as if to take the razor that Cut-in-Half handed to him. 'Golden fly, come to my rescue!' murmured Gringalet, in a faint voice, and assured that his last hour was come. Alas! he called the golden fly without any hopes of its coming to his rescue; he did so as a drowning man exclaims, '*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*' Yet at this very moment Gringalet saw enter into the room one of those small gold and green flies, which look like a spangle of gold flying and flitting around and about; and at the very moment when Cut-in-Half was going to give the razor to Gargousse, the gold fly went *plump* into the eye of this horrible ruffian. A fly in the eye is no great thing, but at the moment it hurts like the prick of a pin, and thus Cut-in-Half, who could scarcely support himself, raised his hand to his eye so suddenly, that he staggered and fell at full length, rolling on the ground like a log to the foot of the bed, to which Gargousse was fastened. 'Golden fly, many thanks!—you have saved me!' cried Gringalet, who, seated and fastened to the chair, had observed all.

"*Ma foi!* it really was true, then, and the golden fly prevented his having his throat cut," exclaimed the prisoners, overjoyed.

"The golden fly for ever!" cried the Blue Cap.

"Listen now," continued the story-teller, "for this is the most beautiful and terrible of the history I had promised you. Cut-in-Half had fallen like a lump of lead, and was so drunk that he could move no more than a log—he was dead drunk and perfectly senseless; but in his fall he very nearly crushed Gargousse, and almost broke his hind paw. You know how savage and revengeful this infernal brute was, and he still held in his paw the razor which his master had given him to cut

Gringalet's throat. What do you suppose the animal did when he saw his master on his back and within his reach? Why, he jumped upon him, squatted on his breast, and whilst with one paw he pushed up his chin to expose his neck, with the other he cut his throat as clean as a whistle, just as Cut-in-Half had taught him to do with poor Gringalet a few minutes before."

"Bravo, bravo! well done!"

"Gargousse for ever!"

"The little golden fly for ever!"

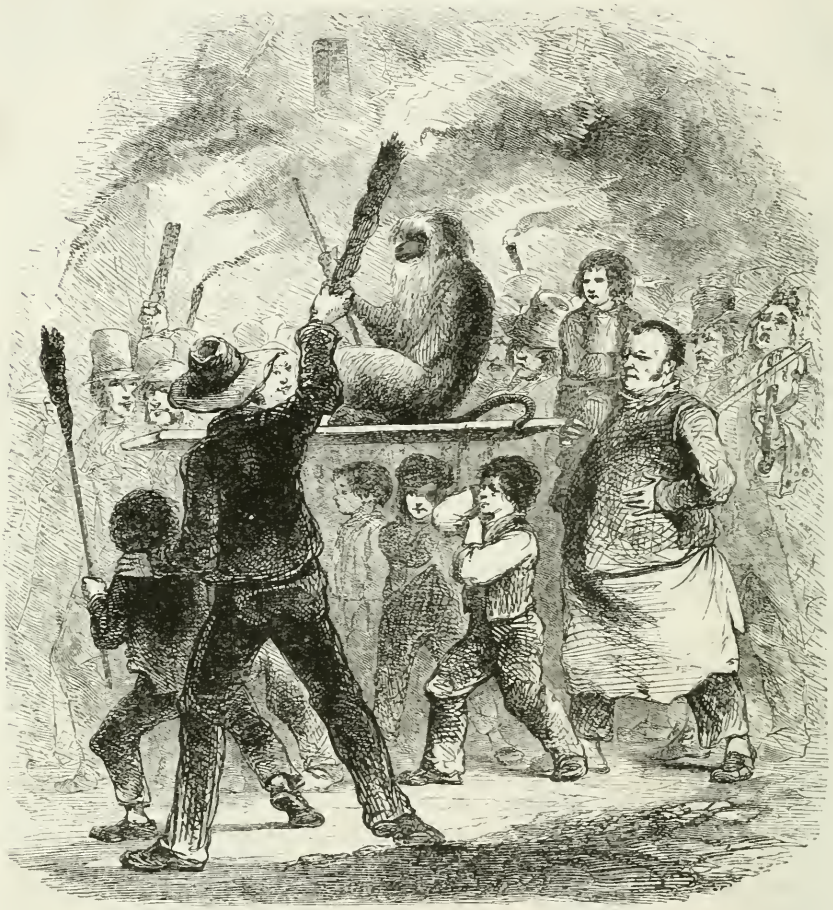
"Gringalet for ever! Gargousse for ever!"

"Well, my friends, I assure you, as you shout now, so did the whole population of La Petite Pologne shout an hour afterwards," said Pique-Vinaigre, delighted at the success of his story and the enthusiasm of his hearers.

"In what way?"

"I told you that, in order to complete his wicked purpose at his ease, the vagabond Cut-in-Half had closed the door inside. Towards the evening, the boys came in one after the other with their animals. The first rapped, but no answer; then, when they had all arrived, they knocked at the door, but no reply; so one went to find Le Doyen to tell him how they had knocked in vain, and that their master did not open to them. 'The fellow must be as drunk as an Englishman,' said he: 'I sent him some wine just now. We must break open the door, for the children cannot pass the night out of doors.' So they burst in the door, and then they went up the stairs, and what should they see but Gargousse chained and crouching on his master's body, playing with the razor! Poor Gringalet was fortunately out of Gargousse's reach and still on the chair, not daring to look on Cut-in-Half's body, but gazing at—guess what—the little golden fly, which, after having flitted round and round the child as if to congratulate him, had, at last, come and settled on his poor little hand. Gringalet related all to Le Doyen and the crowd that came in, and, as it really appeared like the interposition of Providence, Le Doyen cried, 'A triumph for Gringalet! a triumph to Gargousse who killed the infamous Cut-in-Half! He cut others, it was his turn to be cut himself.' 'Yes, yes,' cried the assembled mob, for the beast-shower was universally detested, 'a triumph to Gargousse! a triumph for Gringalet!' It was night, and they lighted straw torches, fastened Gargousse to a bench, which four chaps carried on their shoulders; and the blackguard of an ape seemed as if he felt his consequence, and gave himself the airs of a conquering hero, by shewing his teeth to the multitude. After the ape came Le Doyen, carrying Gringalet in his arms; then all the little fellows, each carrying their beast, followed him, one with his fox, another his marmotte, another his guinea-pig; and those who played on the hurdy-gurdy played now; then there were the charcoal-sellers who had their bells, and there was such an uproar, such joy, such a *fête* as can be scarcely imagined. Behind the musicians and animal-showers, came all the dwellers in La Petite Pologne, men, women, and children, all holding straw torches, and halloaing like mad, 'Vive Gringalet! Vive Gargousse!' The procession advanced in this way round the place in which Cut-in-Half dwelt. It was a very singular

sight to see the old buildings lighted up by the red light of the straw torches, which flared and flared. As to Gringalet, the first thing he did



when he was at liberty was to put the little golden fly in a paper bag, and he exclaimed during his triumph, 'Little flies, I did very right in preventing the spiders from eating you, for ——' "

Pique-Vinaigre was interrupted by a voice from without, exclaiming,—

"Père Roussel, come to your soup; it only wants ten minutes to four!"

"*Ma foi!* the story is nearly finished, and I must go. Many thanks, my lad, you have amused me very much, and that you may tell every body," said the superintendant to Pique-Vinaigre, going to the door; then pausing, "Mind and be quiet," he said, turning towards the prisoners.

"We shall hear the end of the story," said the Skeleton, breathless with suppressed rage; then, adding in a whisper to Gros-Boiteux, "Follow him to the door, and, when you see him leave the yard, cry *Gargousse*, and the informer is a dead man."

"All right," said Le Gros-Boiteux, who accompanied the guardian, and remained at the door watching his steps as he went away.

"I tell you, then," resumed Pique-Vinaigre, "that Gringalet, during the whole time of his triumph, said, 'Little flies, I have ——"

"Gargousse!" cried Gros-Boiteux, as the turnkey quitted the yard.

"I'm here, Gringalet, and I will be your spider!" cried the Skeleton instantly, and darting so suddenly on Germain that he could not make a struggle or utter a cry. His voice expired under the tremendous gripe of the Skeleton's iron fingers.

"If you are the spider, I'm the golden fly, Skeleton of evil," cried a voice, at the moment when Germain, surprised at the violent and sudden attack of his implacable enemy, had fallen back on the bench entirely at the mercy of the ruffian, who, with his knee on his breast, held him by the neck. "Yes, I will be the fly, and a fly of the right sort!" repeated the man in the blue cap of whom we have already spoken, and then, with a fierce spring, he dashed upon the Skeleton, and assailed him on the skull and

between his eyes with a shower of blows from his fist, so tremendous that it sounded like the noise of a smith's hammer ringing on an anvil.

The man in the blue cap, who was no other than the Chourineur, added, as he redoubled the quickness of his *hammering* on the Skeleton's head,—

"It is the shower of blows which M. Rodolph drummed on my sconce, and I have recollected them."

At this unexpected assault the prisoners were all struck with surprise, and did not take part either for or against the Chourineur. Several of them, still under the influence of the salutary impression made on them by Pique-Vinaigre's story, were even glad of an event which saved Germain. The Skeleton staggered at first, and, reeling like an ox under the butcher's pole-axe, mechanically extended his hands to try and ward off his adversary's blows, and Germain, thus freed from the deadly clutch of the Skeleton, half raised himself.

"What does this mean? Who is this scoundrel?" exclaimed Le Gros-Boiteux, and, rushing at the Chourineur, he endeavoured to seize his arms from behind, whilst the latter was making violent efforts to keep the Skeleton down on the bench. Germain's defender replied to Le Gros-Boiteux's attack by a kind of kick, so violent that it sent the cripple rolling on the ground to the farther end of the circle formed by the prisoners.

Germain, whose face was livid and purple, half suffocated, and on his knees by the bench, seemed unconscious of all that was passing around him. The strangulation had been so violent that he could scarcely breathe.

After his first surprise was over, the Skeleton by a desperate effort contrived to keep the Chourineur off and regain his feet. Breathless, drunk with rage and hatred, he was fearful to look upon. His cadaverous face streamed with blood, his upper lip curled like that of a furious wolf, exposed his teeth clenched against each other. At last he exclaimed, in a voice palpitating with anger and exertion, for his struggle had been very violent,—

"Stab him—the ruffian!—you cowards, who let me be traitorously attacked, or the informer will escape!"

During this momentary truce, the Chourineur, raising Germain half fainting, had managed very cleverly to put him in an angle of the wall, and, availing himself of this advantageous position of defence, he was able, without fear of surprise from behind, to resist any attack of the prisoners, on whom the skill and herculean powers he had displayed had imposed considerable respect.

Pique-Vinaigre, greatly alarmed, had disappeared without his absence being remarked.

Seeing hesitation amongst the majority of prisoners, the Skeleton exclaimed,—

'Aid me now, let us do for both, the big 'un as well as the little 'un!"

"Look out for squalls, then," replied the Chourineur, preparing for a struggle, with his two hands squared and standing well-balanced on his loins; "and mind your eye, Skeleton! If you mean to play the Cut-in-Half, I'll serve you as Gargousse did, and slit your weasand."

"Fall on him!" said Le Gros-Boiteux, getting up.

"Why does this vagabond defend spies? Death to the informer, and to him too! If he defends Germain he is a traitor!"

"Yes, yes, death to the spy!—death!"

"Yes, and death to the traitor who defends him!"

Such were the cries uttered by the fiercest of the *détenus*. Another party, more merciful, exclaimed,—

"No, let's hear him first!"

"Yes, let him explain; we mustn't kill a man without a hearing!"

"And without means of defence too! Must we be Cut-in-Halfs?"

"So much the better!" replied the Skeleton's partisans.

"Nothing's too bad for a spy!"

"Let's fall on him! let us support the Skeleton!"

"Yes, let's at the Blue Cap!"

"No, let's support the Blue Cap, and let's at the Skeleton!" retorted the Chourineur's party.

"No, down with the Blue Cap!"

"Down with the Skeleton!"

"Well done my boys!" cried the Chourineur, addressing the prisoners who sided with him. "You're good fellows, and would not massacre a half-dead man, none but cowards would do that. The Skeleton does not care what evil he does; he is sentenced beforehand, and that is why he urges you on; but if you help to kill Germain, you will be severely punished for it. Besides I have something to propose: The Skeleton is desirous of doing for this young man, well, let him come and take him if he thinks he has the pluck to do it; let us two settle it; leave us to ourselves, and see what turns up. But he's afraid; he's like Cut-in-Half, only strong with the weak."

The vigour, energy, and rough manner of the Chourineur, had powerful effect on the prisoners, and a considerable number of them had ranged themselves on his side and surrounded Germain, whilst the Skeleton's party drew round that ruffian. A bloody fray would have ensued, when there was heard in the yard the sonorous and measured tread of a piquet of infantry, always on guard in the prison. Pique-Vinaigre, profiting by the general stir and noise, had gained the yard, and, having knocked at the wicket of the entrance, had told the turnkeys what was passing in the day-room. The arrival of the soldiers put an end to this scene. Germain, the Skeleton, and the Chourineur, were taken before the governor of La Force; the first to make his complaint, the two others to answer for creating a disturbance inside the gaol.

The fright and suffering of Germain had been so great, his weakness so extreme, that he was obliged to lean on two of the turnkeys in order to reach a chamber next to the governor's room. There he was very ill. His neck, excoriated as it was, bore the livid and bleeding imprint of the Skeleton's iron grasp: a few minutes more, and Rigolette's betrothed would have been strangled. The turnkey who had taken an interest in Germain gave him the first assistance. When he had recovered, his first thought was of his deliverer.

"Thanks for your kind cares, sir," he said to the turnkey. "But for that brave man, I must have been killed. Where is he?"

"In the governor's room, telling him how the disturbance arose. It appears that but for him ——"

"I must have been killed. Oh, tell me his name! Who is he?"

"His name I do not know, but they call him the Chourineur; he is an old offender."

"And is his crime now very serious?"

"Very; burglary in the night in an inhabited house," replied the turnkey. "He will probably have a similar dose to Pique-Vinaigre, fifteen or twenty years of hard labour."

Germain shuddered; he would have preferred being bound by gratitude to a man less criminal.

"How dreadful!" he said. "And yet this man without knowing me defended me; such courage! such generosity!"

"Ah, these men have sometimes a touch of good! The main point is that you are saved. To-morrow you will have your private cell, and to-night you will sleep in the infirmary. So, courage, sir. The bad time is over; and when your pretty little visitor comes to see you, you can comfort her, for once in a cell you have nothing to fear; only you will do wisely, I think, not to tell her of this affair."

"Certainly not; but I should like to thank my defender."

"I have been just leaving the governor, who will now interrogate the Skeleton, and I shall take them both, the Skeleton to his dungeon directly, and the Chourineur to the Fosse aux Lions; he will be, besides, somewhat rewarded for what he has done for you; as he is a determined and stout fellow, he will probably replace the Skeleton as captain of the ward."

The Chourineur, having crossed a small passage from the governor's apartment, entered the room in which Germain was.

"Wait for me here," said the turnkey to the Chourineur. "I will go and ask the governor what he decides upon as to the Skeleton, and I will return and let you know. Our young man has quite recovered, and wishes to thank you, and so he should, for otherwise it would have been all over with him." And the turnkey went out.

The Chourineur's countenance was very joyous, and he advanced towards Germain saying, with a cheerful air,—

"Thunder! How glad I am! how glad I saved you!" and he extended his hand to Germain, who, by a feeling of involuntary repulsion, withdrew somewhat, instead of taking the hand which the Chourineur offered to him; then, remembering that he owed his life to this man, he was desirous of repairing this display of repugnance. But the Chourineur perceived it; his features became overcast, and, retreating in his turn, he said with bitter sorrow, "Oh, it is right; your pardon, sir!"

"No, it is I who ought to ask your pardon; am I not a prisoner like yourself? Ought I not to think of the service you have rendered me? You have saved my life. Your hand, sir, I beg—I entreat—your hand!"

"Thanks! but it is useless now. The first feeling is every thing. If you had directly given me a grasp of the hand, it would have afforded me pleasure, but, when I reflect, I would not desire it. Not because I am a prisoner like you," he added, with a sombre and hesitating air, "because, before I came here, I have been ——"

"The turnkey told me all," said Germain, interrupting him; "but yet you saved my life."

"I have done no more than my duty and pleasure, for I know who you are—Monsieur Germain."

"You know me!"

"A little, my lad," said the Chourineur, resuming his usual tone of habitual carelessness; "and, *pardieu!* you would have been very wrong to have attributed my arrival at La Force to chance. If I had not known you, I should not have been in prison."

Germain looked at the Chourineur with amazement.

"What! it was because you knew me?"

"That I am here a prisoner in La Force."

"I, who owe you ——"

"A candle to the Virgin, for having procured me the advantage of being in La Force."

"Really," said Germain, passing his hand over his brow, "I do not know whether the terrible shock I have just undergone has weakened my senses, but it is impossible for me to understand you. The turnkey told me you were here under a charge of—of ——" said Germain, with hesitation.

"Robbery, *pardieu!* and robbery with forcible entry, and moreover at night; nothing could be more complete!" cried the Chourineur, with a hearty laugh.

Germain, painfully excited at the bold hardihood of the Chourineur, could not forbear saying to him,—

"What you, so brave, so generous, and speak in this way! Are you not aware of the terrible punishment to which you are exposed?"

"Twenty years at the galleys; I know that. I am an out-and-out scoundrel, I know that, for taking it so easy. But what's the use when one has been and done it? And then, for me to say that it was you, M. Germain," added the Chourineur, heaving a tremendous sigh, and with an air of assumed contrition, "who are the cause of my misfortune."

"When you explain yourself more clearly, I shall understand you. Jest as much as you please, but my gratitude for the service you have rendered me will never cease or diminish," added Germain sorrowfully.

"Oh, pardon me, M. Germain!" replied the Chourineur, becoming serious. "You do not like to see me laugh at this; do not let us add another word. I must let all out with you, and so, perhaps, force you to shake my hand."

"I have no doubt of that; for, in spite of the crime of which you are accused, and of which you accuse yourself, all in you bespeaks so much courage and frankness that I am convinced you are charged unjustly; strong suspicions may exist, but I am sure that is all."

"Oh, as to that you are mistaken, M. Germain!" said the Chourineur, hastily; "on my word as a man, and as true as I have a protector," the Chourineur took off his cap, "who is more than all the world to me, I robbed at night by forcing the shutter, and was caught in the fact and deprived of all I was endeavouring to carry off."

"But want—hunger—pushed you to such an extremity?"

"Hunger! I had one hundred-and-twenty francs when they appre-

hended me, the remains of a note of one thousand francs, without including the protector I have mentioned to you, who, by the way, does not know that I am here, but will not let me want for any thing. Since, however, I have mentioned him to you, you must suppose I am in earnest, for you must know that he is a man to go on your knees before. So I must tell you, too, that the shower of blows which I drummed on the Skeleton's sconce was a sketch after his style, copied from nature. The idea of the robbery was on his account; and, in fact, if you were not strangled by the Skeleton, it is through him."

"But this protector?"

"Is yours also."

"Mine!"

"Yes, Monsieur Rodolph protects you. When I say *monsieur*, I should say *monseigneur*, for he is at least a prince; but I have a habit of calling him Monsieur Rodolph, which he permits me to do."

"You are under some mistake," said Germain, more and more surprised; "I do not know the prince."

"Yes, but he knows you. You don't believe it? Well, that's possible, for that's his way. He knows that there is some worthy fellow in trouble, and then, in an instant, the good fellow is comforted, and, without being seen or known, he is at work, and kindness falls from the skies, like a tile from a house on your head. So patience, and one day or other you will have your tile."

"Really, what you say amazes me!"

"Ah, you'll have a great deal more to amaze you yet! To return to my protector: Some time ago, after a service which he persisted I had done him, he procured me a splendid position, I need not say where, or any more about it, for it would be a long tale to tell. Well, he sends me to Marseilles to embark and go to a capital appointment in Algeria. I left Paris as happy as a child; but, all of a sudden, a change comes over me."

"That was singular!"

"Why, you must know that once separated from M. Rodolph I was uneasy, disturbed, as fidgety as a dog who has lost his master. It was very stupid,—but so are dogs sometimes, but that does not prevent them from being at least attached, and as well mindful of the nice bits given them, as of the thumps and kicks they have had, and M. Rodolph had given me many nice bits, and, in truth, M. Rodolph is every thing to me. From being a riotous, dare-devil, good-for-nothing blackguard, he made an honest man of me by only saying two words, just for all the world like magic."

"What were the words he said?"

"He said I had still *heart and honour*, although I have been at the galleys, not for having stolen, it is true—ah, never that—but what perhaps is worse, for having killed,—yes," said the Chourineur, in a gloomy tone, "killed in a moment of passion, because formerly growing up like a brute beast, or, rather, as a vagabond, without father or mother, and left abandoned in the streets of Paris, I knew neither God nor devil—neither good nor evil. Sometimes the blood mounted to my eyes, and I saw red, and if I had a knife in my hands I slashed and

hacked—I was a real savage—a beast, and only lived amongst thieves and scoundrels. I was in the mud, and in the mud I lived as well as I could. But when M. Rodolph said to me that since, in spite of the contempt of all the world and my misery, instead of plundering like others I had preferred working as long as I could, and for what I could, that shewed I had still *heart* and *honour*—thunder!—you see these two words had the same effect on me as if I had been seized by the hair of my head and lifted a thousand feet into the air above the vermin with whom I dwelt, and shewed me the filth in which my life was spent. So I said, 'Thankye, I've had enough of this!' Then my heart beat with something else beside anger, and I took an oath to myself always to preserve that honour which M. Rodolph spoke of. You see, M. Germain, that when M. Rodolph told me so kindly that I was not so bad as I believed myself to be, that encouraged me, and, thanks to him, I became better than I had been."

When he heard this language, Germain comprehended less and less how the Chourineur had committed the robbery of which he accused himself.

"No," he said to himself, "it is impossible; the man who was so exalted at the two words *honour* and *heart* cannot have committed the robbery of which he talks with so much self-complacency."

The Chourineur continued, without remarking the astonishment of Germain:—

"To say the truth, what made me be like a dog to his master to M. Rodolph was that he raised me in my own opinion. Before I knew him I never felt but on my skin, but he moved me inwardly, and to the bottom of my heart. Once away from him and the place he inhabited I felt like a body without a soul. In proportion as I proceeded farther I said to myself, 'He leads such a strange life—mixes with such scamps (I can answer for that), that he risks his body twenty times a-day, and, under some such circumstances, I may be his dog and defend my master, for I am strong in the jaws; but then he had said to me, 'My good fellow, you must become useful to others, therefore go where you can be serviceable.' I was very nearly replying, 'I have no one to serve but you, Monsieur Rodolph,' but I daredn't. He said to me, 'Go,' and I went, and have gone as far I could; but, thunder! when I ought to have gone on board the ship, left France, and put the sea between M. Rodolph and myself, I had not the courage. He had desired his correspondent to give me a great lump of money when I sailed, so I went to the gentleman, and said to him, 'Sir, I can't do it—I'd rather do any thing, so please to give me enough to pay my journey on foot; I have good legs, and I will return to Paris, for I cannot leave France. M. Rodolph will be angry, and, perhaps, refuse to see me—that's possible; but I shall see him, know where he is, and if he goes on as usual, sooner or later I may, perhaps, arrive in time to come between him and a stab with a knife; and then I really cannot go so far away from him! Something I cannot account for attracts me to his side.' Well, they gave me sufficient to pay my way, and I reached Paris. Then I really was frightened. What could I say to M. Rodolph to excuse myself?—but, after all, he would not eat me up; so I went to find his friend, a tall, bald-headed man, but

a right sort of fellow as ever broke bread. When I saw M. Murphy, I said, 'Now my fate will be decided;' and my throat was dry, and my heart beat such a pace! I expected to catch it pretty handsomely, but, what d'ye think? Why, the worthy gentleman received me just as if we had only parted the previous evening, and told me that M. Rodolph, instead of being angry, wished to see me as soon as possible. Well, so I went at once to my protector,—him with such a stout fist and good heart, and when I was face to face with him—he who is as terrible as a lion and as gentle as a child—he who is a prince, and yet puts on a blouse like me—and once on a time (I bless the day, or night, rather) laid on me such a shower of blows that I saw nothing but fire—why, M. Germain, when I reflected on all the agreeable qualities he is master of, I felt completely overcome, and I snivelled like a woman. Well, instead of laughing at me, for I must be a rum-looking lot when I pipe my eye, M. Rodolph said to me seriously, 'Here you are back again, my good fellow, eh?'

'Yes, M. Rodolph, and pray excuse me if I have done wrong, but I could not help it. Give me some corner in your court-yard, give me a crust and a glass, or let me earn it here—that's all I ask, and pray don't be angry with me for coming back.' 'So far from it, my man, you have come back just in time to do me a service.' 'I, M. Rodolph?—is that possible? Well, there must have been something above, for if not, how could I explain how it was I must come back here at the very moment when you wanted me? What can I do for you, Monsieur Rodolph?' 'An honest, worthy young man, in whom I take the interest I should do in a son, has been unjustly accused of robbery, and is a prisoner in La Force. His name is Germain; he is of a gentle, quiet disposition. The wretches with whom he is confined have conceived a great aversion for him, and he is in great danger. You unfortunately have known what a prison life is, and a great many prisoners; could not you, in case there may be any of your old companions in La Force (we will find that out), go and see them, and, by promises of money, which shall be duly performed, induce them to protect this unfortunate young man?'"

"But who can this generous and unknown man be, who takes so much interest in my fate?" asked Germain, more and more surprised.

"You will learn, perhaps, hereafter—as for me I do not know. To return to my conversation with M. Rodolph. Whilst he was speaking to me there came an idea into my head, so curious, so whimsical, that I could not forbear laughing outright before him. 'What is it, my lad?' said he. 'Why, M. Rodolph, I laugh because I am so happy, and I am happy because I have the means of putting your M. Germain quite safe from any ill-will on the part of the prisoners, of giving him a protector who will defend him boldly, for when once the young fellow is under the care of the man I mean, not one will dare look at him impertinently.' 'Very good—one of your old comrades, no doubt?' 'Exactly so, M. Rodolph; he has been in La Force some days, that I know. But I must have some money.' 'How much shall you require?—a note for a thousand francs? Here it is.' 'Thank'ye, M. Rodolph; in two days you will have some news.'"

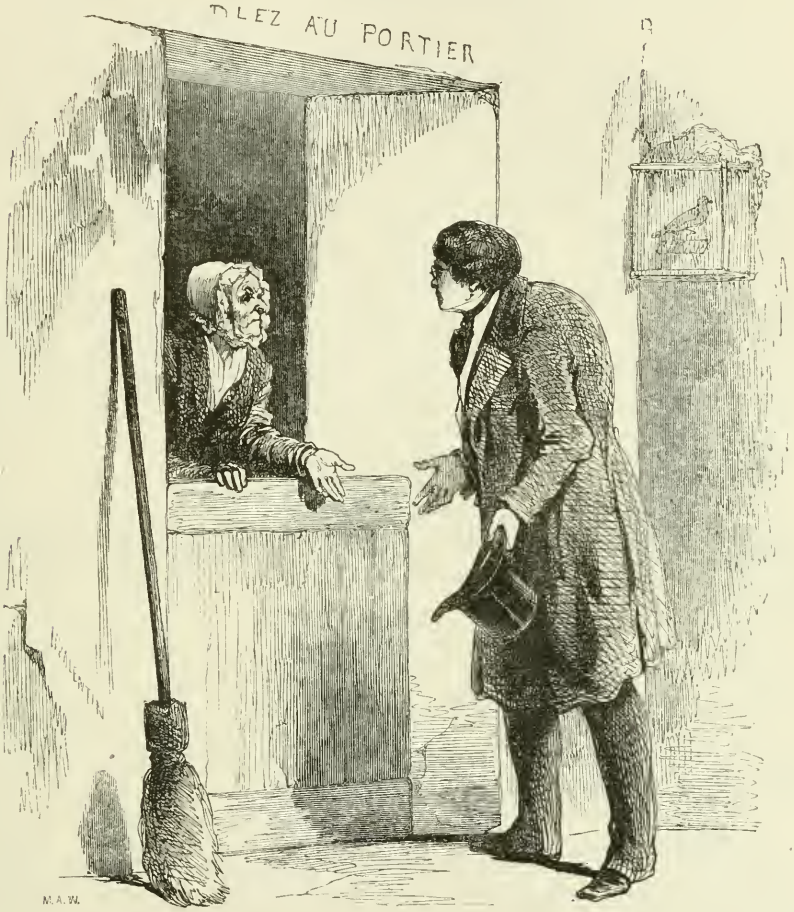
"I begin to understand, or rather, I'm afraid to understand," exclaimed Germain. "To come and protect me in this prison you have, perhaps, committed a robbery? Oh, what remorse will beset all my life!"

"Hold hard! M. Rodolph had said I had *heart* and *honour*—these words are my law, you must know; and he may still say it to me, for if I am no better than I was before, at least I am no worse."

"But this robbery, if you have not committed it, why are you here?"

"Listen!—there is a capital joke with my thousand francs. I bought myself a black wig, shaved my whiskers, put on blue spectacles, bent my head on one side, and made up my back as if it were humped, and then went in search of two apartments to let, on the ground-floor, in a bustling part of the city. I found what I looked for in the Rue de Provence, and paid a month in advance, under the name of M. Grégoire. Next day I went to the Temple to buy furniture for my two rooms, with my black wig, my hump, and blue glasses, so that I might be easily recognised. Well, I sent the goods to the Rue de Provence, and,

moreover, six silver spoons, which I bought in the Boulevard Saint-Denis, still disguised with my hump. I returned then to arrange all my affairs in my residence. I told the porter I should not sleep there until



the following night, and took away my key. The windows of the two rooms were closed with strong shutters. Before I went away I had purposely left one with the bolt undrawn. The night came, and I put off my wig, my spectacles, my hump, and the clothes in which I had made my purchases and hired my apartments, putting this suit in a portmanteau, which I forwarded to M. Murphy, M. Rodolph's friend, begging him to take care of them for me. I then bought this blouse, and the blue cotton cap, and a bar of iron two feet long; and, at one o'clock in the morning I went into the Rue de Provence, where I lurked about before my lodging, awaiting the moment when the patrole would pass and prevent my robbing myself—committing a burglary on my own premises, in order to be caught and apprehended."

And the Chourineur burst into a fit of hearty laughter.

"I begin to understand," cried Germain.

"But I was nearly getting in a 'fix,' for no patrole passed. I might have robbed myself twenty times with the greatest ease and safety. At last, about two o'clock in the morning, I heard the tread of the soldier boys, and then I pushed open the window, jumped into the room, pocketed the silver spoons and some other trifles. Fortunately the lively patrole had heard the smash of the windows, and just as I leaped out of the window they laid hands upon me. They knocked at the door, which the porter opened, they sent for the serjeant of police, who came. The porter told him that the two rooms had been hired that morning by a hump-backed gentleman, with black hair and blue spectacles, whose name was Gregory. I had the thick head of hair which you now see, and my eyes were as wide open as a hare's on the watch, was as upright as a Russian sentinel, and could not be taken for a hump-backed gentleman, with blue glasses and black hair. I confessed all, and was conducted to the station, and from the station to this prison, where I arrived in the nick of time to snatch from the clutch of the Skeleton the young man of whom M. Rodolph had said to me, 'I am interested in him as much as if he were my own son.'"

"What do I not owe you for such devotion?"

"Not to me—you owe it to M. Rodolph."

"But whence arises his interest in me?"

"That is for him to tell you, or, perhaps, he will not tell you, for he very often chooses to do good, and if you ask him why, he will not let you know."

"M. Rodolph, then, knows you are here?"

"I'm not such a fool as to tell him my plans; perhaps he would not have consented to my whim, and, really, I must say it was capital."

"But what risks you have run—indeed, still run."

"Oh, what risk? I might not have been brought to La Force—that was the worst risk—but I relied on M. Rodolph's interest to have my prison changed, so that I might have got to you."

"But at your trial?"

"Well, I shall beg M. Murphy to send me the portmanteau. Before the judge I shall appear in my black wig, blue spectacles, and hump, and shall be again M. Grégoire for the porter who let me the chambers and the tradespeople who sold me the goods. So much for the robbery. If they wish to see the thief again, I'll put off my suit, and then it will be as clear as daylight that the robber and the robbed together only make a total of the Chourineur and no more. And what the devil would you expect when it is proved that I robbed myself?"

"Why, indeed," said Germain, more assured; "but since you take so much interest in me, why did you not speak to me when you came first into the prison?"

"I knew instantly of the scheme against you by the prisoners, and I might have denounced them before Pique-Vinaigre began or ended his story; but to denounce such ruffians did not suit my ideas,—I preferred trusting only to my fist in order to snatch you from the clutch of the Skeleton; and when I saw that scoundrel I said to myself, 'This is a

fine opportunity for putting in practice that shower of blows to which I owe the honour of M. Rodolph's acquaintance.'"

"But if all the prisoners had taken part against you, alone, what could you have done?"

"Why then I should have shrieked like an eagle and called lustily for help. But I preferred having my little affair all to myself, that I might be able to say to M. Rodolph, 'I was all alone in the matter: I have defended and will defend your friend—be easy on that subject.'"

At this moment the turnkey suddenly returned to the apartment.

"Monsieur Germain, go to the governor—he wishes to speak to you immediately. And you, Chourineur, go down into the Fosse-aux-Lions; your are to be *prévôt*, if you like, for you have all the qualifications for that duty, and the prisoners will not joke with a man of your sort."

"It is all the same to me, I'd as soon be captain as private."

"Will you refuse my hand now?" said Germain, cordially.

"*Ma foi!* no, M. Germain!—I'll shake hands with all my heart."

"We shall see one another again, for I am now under your protection. I shall have nothing more to fear, and shall, therefore, come down every day from my cell into the yard."

"Make yourself quite easy on that score. But now I think of it, write a line to M. Rodolph, who will then no longer be uneasy about you, and will also learn that I am here for a *good* reason, for if he were to hear that I had committed a robbery, and did not know all the real facts,—thunder! that would not do by any means."

"Make your mind easy: I will write this very evening to my unknown protector. Once more, good bye, and thanks most heartily, my worthy friend."

"Good-bye, M. Germain. I must return to those scoundrels, and I'll make them go right; if not, let them look out for squalls!"

"When I reflect that it is on my account that you must remain some time longer with these wretches ——"

"What consequence is that? There is no fear of their turning on me;" and the Chourineur followed the turnkey.

Germain went to the governor. What was his surprise to find Rigolette there! pale, agitated, and her eyes bathed in tears; and yet smiling through her tears, her countenance expressing unutterable happiness.

"I have good news for you, sir," said the governor to Germain; "justice has declared that no prosecution can be instituted against you; and in consequence of the withdrawing of this, and explanations that have taken place, I have received an order to set you at liberty immediately."

"Sir!—what do you say?—can it be possible?"

Rigolette tried to speak, but her extreme emotion prevented her, and she could only make an affirmative sign to Germain with her head, and clasp her hands.

"Mademoiselle arrived a few minutes after I had received the order to set you at liberty," added the governor. "A very powerful letter of recommendation which she brought to me informed me of the touching devotion she had shewn to you in prison; and it is with extreme pleasure that I sent for you, certain that you will be very happy to offer your arm to Mademoiselle, and lead her hence."

"A dream!—it must be a dream!" said Germain. "Ah, sir! how can I thank you? Excuse my astonishment—joy prevents me from thanking you as I ought."

"And I, too, M. Germain—I cannot find a word to say," said Rigolette; "only imagine my delight when I left you on finding the friend of M. Rodolph, who was waiting for me."

"Again M. Rodolph!" exclaimed Germain, astonished.

"Yes, and M. Murphy said to me,—'Germain is free—here is a letter for the governor of the prison; when you arrive there he will have received the order for Germain's release, and you may take him away with you.' I could not believe what I heard, and yet it was true. Well, as quick as possible, I took a hackney-coach, and came here; it is waiting for us at the gate."

* * * * * *

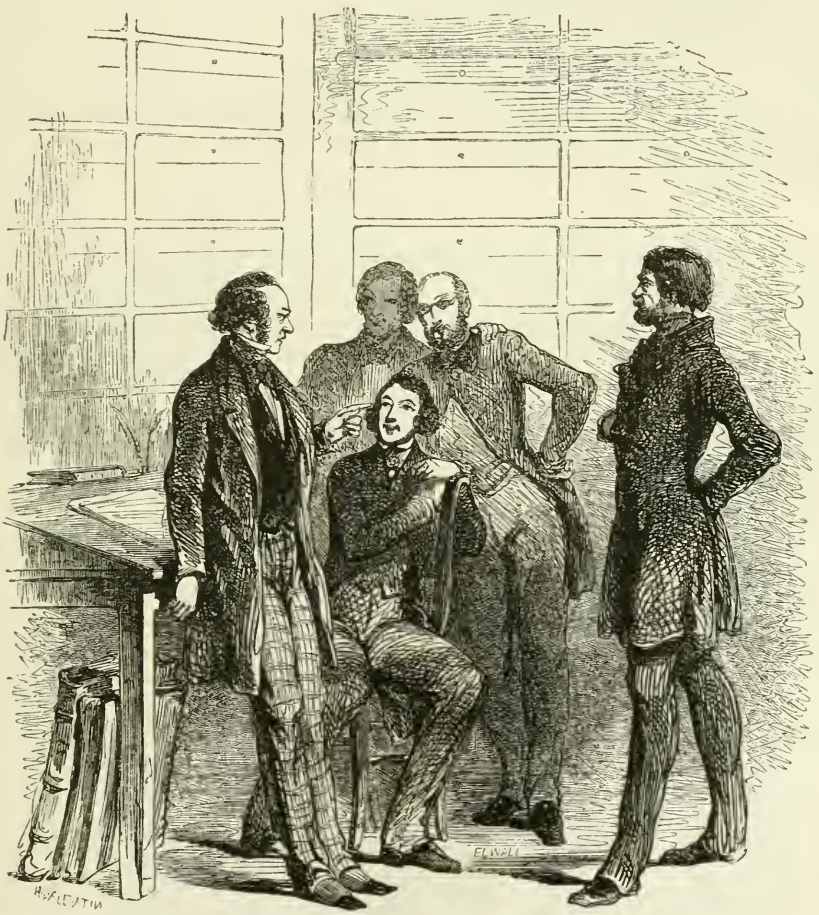
We will not attempt to paint the delight of the two lovers when they quitted La Force, and the evening they passed together in Rigolette's small apartment, which Germain quitted at eleven o'clock to go to a humble, furnished room.

CHAPTER LI.

PUNISHMENT.

We will again conduct the reader into the study of Jacques Ferrand. Availing ourselves of the loquacity of the clerks, we shall endeavour, through their instrumentality, to narrate the events that had occurred since the disappearance of Cecily.

"A hundred sous to ten, if his present state continues, that in less than a month our governor will go off with a pop."



"The fact is, since Cecily left, he is only skin and bones."

"And now he takes to the priests again more than ever."

"The curé of the parish is a most respectable man, and I overheard him say yesterday, to another priest who accompanied him,—'It is admirable! M. Jacques Ferrand is the personification of charity.'"

"Well, then, when the curé declares a thing one must credit it; and yet to believe that the governor is charitable is almost beyond my belief."

"Remember the forty sous for our breakfast."

"Yes, but then the head-clerk says that three days ago the governor realised a large sum in the funds, and that he is about to sell his business."

"Well, no doubt he has the means to retire."

"He has speculated on the Bourse, and gained lots of money."

"What astonishes me is this friend who follows him like his shadow."

"Yes, he does not leave M. Ferrand for a moment; they eat together, and seem as if they were inseparable."

"It seems to me as if I had seen this intruder somewhere!"

"Have you not remarked that every two hours there comes a man with large light moustaches, with a military air, who inquires for the intruder of the porter? This friend then goes down stairs, discourses for a moment with the hero with moustaches, after which the military gent turns on his heel, goes away, and returns two hours afterwards."

"Yes, I have remarked it. It appears to me that, as I go and come, I see in the street men who appear to be watching the house."

"Perhaps the head-clerk knows more of this than we do. By the way, where is he?"

"At the house of the Countess Macgregor, who has been assassinated, and is now despaired of. They sent for the governor to-day, but the head-clerk was despatched in his stead."

"He has plenty in his hands, then, for I suppose he will fill Germain's place as cashier."

"Talking of Germain, an odd thing has occurred. The governor, in order to free him from prison, has declared that he made a mistake in his accounts, and that he has found the money he accused Germain of taking."

"I do not see any thing odd in that—it is but justice. I was sure that Germain was incapable of theft."

"Ah, here's a coach, gents!" said Chalamel, looking out of the window; "it is not a spicy turn-out like that of the famous Vicomte, the gay Saint-Rémy, but a hack concern."

"Who is coming out of it?"

"Only the curé—a very worthy man he is too."

"Silence!—some one comes in!—to your work, my boys!"

And all the clerks, leaning over their desks, began to scrawl away with much apparent industry, and as if their attention had not been taken off their business for a single instant.

The pale features of the priest expressed at once a gentle melancholy combined with an air of intelligence and venerable serenity. A small black cap covered the crown of his head, while his long grey locks hung

down over the collar of his great-coat. Let us merely add to this hasty sketch, that owing to the worthy priest's implicit confidence in the words and actions of others, he was, and ever had been, completely blinded by the deep and well-practised hypocrisy of Jacques Ferrand.

"Is your worthy employer in his room, my children?" inquired the curé.

"Yes, M. l'Abbé, he is," answered Chalamel, as, rising respectfully, he opened the door of an adjoining study, and waited for the priest to enter.

Hearing loud voices in the apartment, and unwilling to overhear words not intended for his ears, the abbé walked rapidly forwards, and tapped briskly at the door.

"Come in," said a voice with a strong Italian accent; and entering, the priest found himself in the presence of Polidori and Jacques Ferrand.

The clerks did not appear to have erred in calculating upon the approaching end of their employer. He was, indeed, scarcely to be recognised. Spite of the almost spectral thinness and pallor of his sharpened features, a deep red fever-spot burnt and scorched upon his projecting cheek-bones; a sort of incessant tremor, amounting occasionally to convulsive spasms and starts, shook his attenuated frame. His coarse, but wasted hands, seemed parched with feverish heat, while his bloodshot eyes were shrouded from view by the large green glasses he wore. Altogether his face was a fearful index of the internal ravages of a fast-consuming disease.

The physiognomy of Polidori offered a strong contrast to that of the notary. Nothing could express a more bitter irony—a more biting contempt, than the features of this hardened villain, surrounded as they were by a mass of red hair, slightly mingled with grey, hanging in wild disorder over his pale, wrinkled brow, and partially hiding his sharp, penetrating eyes, which, green and transparent as the stone known as the *aqua marine*, were placed very close to his hooked nose, and imparted a still more sinister character to the look of sarcastic malevolence that dwelt on his thin, compressed lips. Such was Polidori, as, attired in a suit of entire black, he sat beside the desk of Jacques Ferrand. At the sight of the priest both rose.

"And how do you find yourself, my good M. Ferrand?" inquired the abbé, in a tone of deep solicitude; "let me hope you are better."

"Much the same as you last saw me, M. l'Abbé," replied the notary. "No sleep, no rest, and constantly devoured by fever; but God's will be done!"

"Alas! M. l'Abbé," interposed Polidori, "my poor friend is no better; but what a blessed spirit he is in!—what resignation!—finding no other relief from his suffering than in doing good!"

"Have the goodness to cease these praises, which I am far from meriting," said the notary, in a short, dry tone, as though struggling hard to restrain his feelings of rage and resentment; "to the Lord alone belongs the right of judging what is good and what evil—I am but a miserable sinner!"

"We are all sinners," replied the abbé, mildly; "but all have not the extreme charity by which you are distinguished, my worthy friend.

Few, indeed, like you, are capable of weaning their affections from their earthly goods, that they may be employed only as a means of leading a more Christianlike life. Are you still determined upon retiring from your profession, the better to devote yourself to religious duties?"

"I disposed of my practice a day or two ago, for a large and handsome sum. This money, united with other property, will enable me to found the institution I was speaking to you of, and of which I have entirely sketched out the plan. I am about to lay it before you, and to ask your assistance in improving it where necessary."

"My noble-minded friend," exclaimed the abbé, with the deepest and holiest admiration, "how naturally and unostentatiously you do these things! Ah, well might I say there were but few who resembled you; and upon the heads of such too many blessings can scarcely be prayed for and wished."

"Few persons, like my friend Jacques here," said Polidori, with an ironical smile, which wholly escaped the abbé, "are fortunate enough to possess both piety and riches, charity, and discrimination as to the right channel into which to pour their wealth, in order that it may work well for the good of their soul."

At this repetition of sarcastic eulogium, the notary's hand became clenched with internal emotion, while, through his spectacles, he darted a look of deadly hatred on Polidori.

"Do you perceive, M. l'Abbé," said the *dear friend* of Jacques Ferrand, hastily, "he has these convulsive twitchings of the limbs continually?—and yet he will not have any advice. He really makes me quite wretched to see him, as it were, killing himself! Nay, my excellent friend, spite of those displeased looks, I will persist in declaring, in the presence of M. l'Abbé, that you are destroying yourself by refusing all succour as you do."

As Polidori uttered these words, a convulsive shudder shook the notary's whole frame; but in another instant he had regained the mastery over himself, and was calm as before. A less simple-minded man than the abbé might have perceived, both during this conversation and in that which followed, a something unnatural in the language and forced actions of Jacques Ferrand, for it is scarcely necessary to state that his present proceedings were dictated to him by a will and authority he was powerless to resist, and that it was by the command of Rodolph the wretched man was compelled to adopt words and conduct diametrically the reverse of his own sentiments or inclinations. And so it was, that, when sore pressed, the notary seemed half-inclined to resist the arbitrary and invisible power he found himself obliged to obey. But a glance at Polidori soon put an end to his indecision, and restraining all his rage and impotent fury, Jacques Ferrand forbore any further manifestation of futile rage, and bent beneath the yoke he could neither shake off nor break.

"Alas, M. l'Abbé!" resumed Polidori, as though taking an infernal pleasure in thus torturing the miserable notary, "my poor friend wholly neglects his health. Let me entreat of you to join your request to mine, that he will be more careful of his precious self, if not for himself or his friends, at least for the sake of the poor and needy, whose hope and support he is."

"Enough!—enough!" murmured the notary, in a deep guttural voice.

"No," said the priest, much moved, "'tis not enough! You can never be reminded too frequently that you belong not to yourself, and that you are to blame for neglecting your health. During the ten years I have known you I cannot recollect your ever being ill before the present time, but really the last month has so changed you that you are scarcely like the same person. And I am the more struck with the alteration in your appearance, since for some little time I have not seen you. You may recollect that when you sent for me the other day, I could not conceal my surprise on finding you so changed; during the short space of time that has elapsed since that visit, I find you even more rapidly altered for the worse. You are visibly wasting away, and occasion us all very serious uneasiness. I therefore most earnestly entreat of you to consider and attend to your health."

"Believe me, M. l'Abbé, I feel most grateful for the kind interest you express, but that I cannot bring myself to believe my situation as dangerous as you do."

"Nay," said Polidori, "since you are thus obstinate, M. l'Abbé shall know all. He greatly loves, esteems, and honours you; but how will those feelings be increased when he learns the real cause of your languishing condition, with the fresh claims your additional merits give you to his regard and veneration!"

"M. l'Abbé," said the notary, impatiently, "I sent to beg your company that I might confer with you on a matter of importance, and not to take up your time in listening to the absurd and exaggerated eulogiums of *my friend!*"

"You know, Jacques," said Polidori, fixing a piercing glance of

fearful meaning on the notary, "that it is useless attempting to escape from me, and that you must hear all I have got to say."

The person so addressed cast down his eyes, and durst not reply. Polidori continued,—

"You may probably have remarked, M. l'Abbé, that the first symptoms of our friend's illness manifested themselves in a sort of nervous attack, which followed the abominable scandal raised by the affair of Louise Morel, while in his service."

A sort of aguish shivering ran over the notary.

"Is it possible that you, sir, are acquainted with that unfortunate

girl's story?" inquired the priest, greatly astonished. "I imagined you had only been in Paris a few days."

"And you were correctly informed; but my good friend Jacques told me all about it, as a man would relate such a circumstance to his friend and physician, since he attributed the nervous shock under which

he is now labouring to the excessive indignation awakened in his mind by the discovery of his servant's crime. But that is not all. My poor friend's sympathies have been still more painfully awakened by a fresh blow, which, as you perceive, has had a very serious effect on his health. An old and faithful servant, attached to him by many years of well-requited service ——"

"You allude to the untimely end of Madame Séraphin, I presume," said the curé, interrupting Polidori. "I heard of the melancholy affair; she was drowned, I believe, from some carelessness or imprudence manifested by her while making one in a party of pleasure. I can quite understand the distress such a circumstance must have occasioned M. Ferrand, whose kind heart would be unable to forget that she who was thus snatched from life had, for ten long years, been his faithful, zealous domestic; far from blaming such regrets, I think them but natural, and reflecting as much honour on the survivor as the deceased."

"M. l'Abbé," said the notary, "let me beseech of you to cease commending my virtues; you confuse—you make me really uncomfortable."

"And who then shall speak of them as they deserve?" asked Polidori, with feigned affection; "will you?—oh, no! But, M. l'Abbé, you shall have a fresh opportunity of praising him as he deserves. Listen! You are, perhaps, ignorant that Jacques took a third servant, to replace Louise Morel and Madame Séraphin? If you are not aware of that fact, you have still to learn all his goodness towards poor Cecily; for that was the name of the new domestic, M. l'Abbé."

Involuntarily the notary sprung from his seat, and with eyes glaring with rage and madness, even in spite of the glasses he wore, he cried, while a deep, fiery glow overspread his before livid countenance,—

"Silence! I command!—I insist!—I forbid another word on this subject!"

"Come, come!" said the abbé, soothingly, "compose yourself. It seems there is still some generous action I have not yet been told of; I really must plead guilty to admiring the candour of your friend, however his love of truth may offend your modesty. I was not acquainted with the servant you alluded to, as, unfortunately, just about the time she entered the service of our worthy M. Ferrand, he became so overwhelmed with cares and business as to be obliged temporarily to interrupt our frequent friendly meetings."

"That was merely a pretext to conceal the fresh act of goodness he meditated, M. l'Abbé, and, at the risk of paining his modesty, I am determined you shall know all about it," said Polidori, with a malignant smile, while Jacques Ferrand, in mute rage, leaned his elbows on his desk, while he concealed his face with his hands. "Imagine, then, M. l'Abbé," resumed Polidori, feigning to address himself to the curé, but at each phrase contriving to direct an ironical glance towards Jacques Ferrand,—"imagine that my kind-hearted friend, here, found his new domestic possessed of the purest and rarest qualifications, the most perfect modesty with the gentleness and piety of an angel; nor was this all. The quick penetration of my friend Jacques soon discovered that the female in question (who, by the way, was both young and beautiful) had never been accustomed to a servant's life, and that, to the

most austere virtue, she added great and varied information, with first-rate talents, which had received the highest cultivation."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the abbé, much interested in the recital, "I was not aware of this. But what ails you, my good M. Ferrand?—you seem ill and disturbed!"

"A slight headache," answered the notary, wiping the cold, clammy drops from his brow, for the restraint he imposed upon himself was most severe,—"nothing more!—it will soon pass off."

Polidori shrugged up his shoulders, smiled maliciously, and said,—

"Observe, M. l'Abbé, that Jacques is always seized with the same symptoms directly any of his good actions are brought forward. But never mind—I am determined that his light shall no longer be hid under a bushel, and it is my firm intention to reveal all his hidden charities. But first let me go on with the history of his generous exertions in favour of Cecily, who, on her side, had quickly discovered the excellency of Jacques's heart, and when questioned by him touching the past, she candidly confessed that, left a stranger and wholly destitute in a foreign land, by the imprudence of her husband, she considered herself particularly fortunate in being able to obtain a shelter under so sanctified a roof as M. Ferrand's as a most singular interposition of Providence. The sight of so much misfortune, united to so much heavenly resignation, banished all hesitation from the mind of Jacques, and he wrote to the birth-place of the unfortunate girl for further inform-

ation respecting her. The reply to his inquiries was most satisfactory, as well as confirmatory of all the young person had previously stated. Then, assured of rightly dispensing his benevolence, Jacques bestowed the most paternal kindness on Cecily, whom he sent back to her own country, with a sum of money to support her till better days should dawn, or she be enabled to obtain some suitable employment. Now I will not utter one

word in Jacques's praise for doing all this—let the facts speak for themselves."

"Excellent!—most excellent!" exclaimed the deeply-affected curé.

"M. l'Abbé," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hoarse and abrupt tone, "I do not desire to take up your valuable time in discoursing of myself, but of the project respecting which I requested your presence, and for the furtherance of which I wished to obtain your valuable concurrence."

"I can well understand that the praises so justly bestowed on you by your friend are painful to one of your extreme modesty; let us, then, merely speak of your good works as though you were not the author of them. But, first of all, let me give an account of my own proceedings in the matters you confided to me. According to your desire, I have deposited the sum of one hundred thousand crowns in the Bank of France, in my own name, with the intention of employing that amount in the act of restitution of which you are the medium, and which I am to effect. You preferred the money being lodged in the bank, although, in my opinion, it would have been in equal safety with you."

"And in so doing, M. l'Abbé, I only acted in concurrence with the wishes of the person making this restitution for the sake of his conscience. His request to me was to place the sum mentioned by you in your hands, and to entreat of you to forward it to the widow lady, Madame Fermont, whose maiden name was Renneville (the notary's voice trembled as he pronounced these two names), whenever that person should present herself to you: I fully substantiate her claims."

"Be assured," replied the priest, "I will with pleasure discharge the trust committed to me."

"But that is not the only matter in which your assistance is solicited."

"So much the better, if the others resemble this, for, without seeking the motives which dictate it, a voluntary restitution is always calculated to excite a deep interest; these rigid decrees of an awakened conscience are always the harbingers of a deep and sincere repentance, and such an expiation cannot fail to bring forth good fruits."

"True, M. l'Abbé, the soul must indeed be in a perilous state when such a sum as one hundred thousand crowns is voluntarily refunded. For my part, I confess to having felt more inquisitive on the subject than yourself; but what chance had my curiosity against the firm and unshaken discretion of my friend Jacques? I am, therefore, still in ignorance of the name of the individual who thus restores such immense wealth for their conscience sake."

"But," continued Polidori, eyeing Jacques Ferrand with a keen significant glance, "you will hear to what an extent are carried the generous scruples of the author of this restitution; and, to tell the truth, I strongly suspect that our right-minded friend here was the first to awaken the slumbering feelings of the guilty person, as well as to point out the surest and fittest way of tranquillising them."

"How so?" inquired the priest.

"What do you mean?" asked the notary.

"Why, remember the Morels, those honest, deserving people."

"True, true!" interposed Jacques Ferrand, in a hasty tone,—"I had forgotten them."

"Imagine, M. l'Abbé, that the author of this restitution, doubtless influenced by Jacques, not content with the restitution of this large sum, wishes also—— But my worthy friend shall speak for himself—I will not deprive him of the pleasure of relating so fine an action."

"Pray let me hear all about it, my dear M. Ferrand," said the priest.

"You are aware," replied Jacques Ferrand, with affected sympathy, strangely mingled with the deep repugnance he entertained at being compelled to play a part so opposite to his inclinations, and which betrayed itself in the alteration his voice and manner exhibited, even in spite of all his attempts to be on his guard,—"you are aware, I say, M. l'Abbé, that the misconduct of that unhappy girl, Louise Morel, took so deep an effect on her father as to deprive him of his senses, and to reduce his numerous family to the very verge of destitution, thus bereft of their sole support and prop. Happily Providence interposed in their behalf, and the person whose voluntary restitution you have so kindly undertaken to arrange, not satisfied with this step, believed his abuse of confidence required still further expiation, and, therefore, inquired of me if I knew any genuine case of real and unmerited distress. I immediately thought of the Morel family, and recommended them so warmly, that the unknown personage begged me to hand over to you (as I shall do) the necessary funds for purchasing an annuity of eighty pounds a-year for the joint lives of Morel, his wife, and children."

"Truly," said the abbé, "such conduct is beyond my poor praise. Most gladly will I add this commission to the former; still permit me to express my surprise that you were not yourself selected to arrange an affair of this nature, the proceedings of which must be so much more familiar to you than to me."

"The reason for your being preferred, M. l'Abbé, was because the individual in question believed that his expiatory acts would go forth even in greater sanctity if they passed through hands as pure and pious as your own."

"Then be it so! and I will at once proceed to arrange for an annuity to Morel, the worthy, but unfortunate parent, of Louise. Still I am inclined to think with your friend, that you are not altogether a stranger to the motives which dictated this additional expiation."

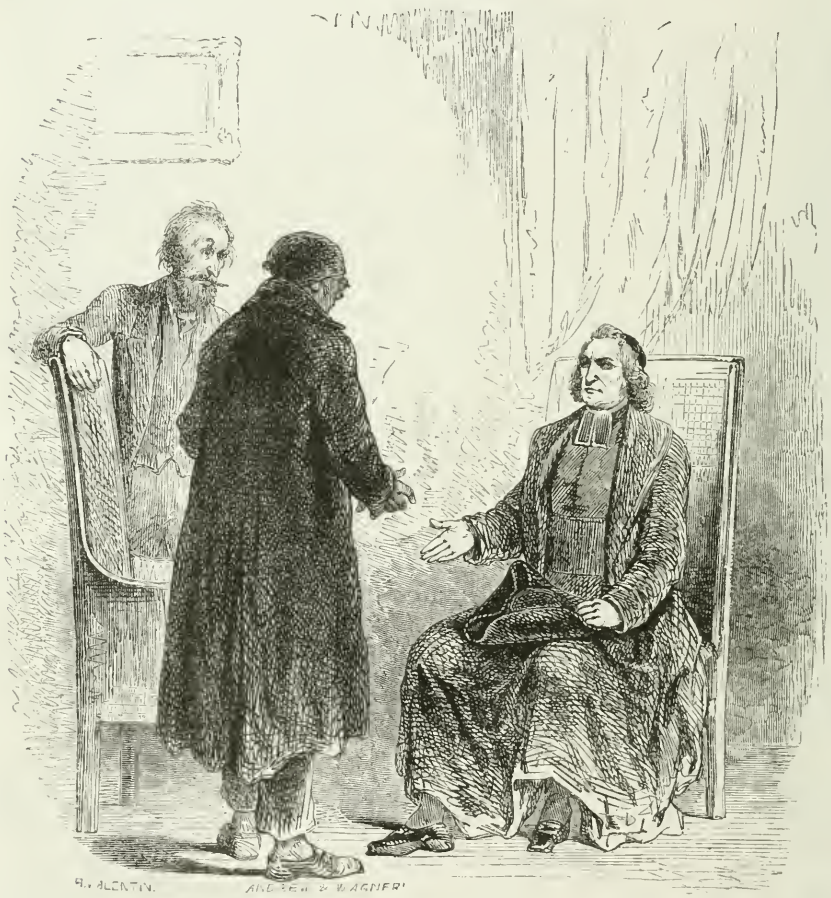
"Nay, M. l'Abbé, let me beg of you to believe that all I did was to recommend the Morel family as a deserving case upon which to exercise charitable sympathy; I had no further share in the good work," said Jacques Ferrand.

"Now, then," said Polidori, "you are next to be gratified, M. l'Abbé, with seeing to what an extent my worthy friend there has carried his philanthropic views, as manifested in the foundation of such an establishment as that we have already discussed. He will read to you the plan definitely decided on—the necessary money for its endowment is ready, and all is prepared for immediate action; but since yesterday a doubt has crossed his mind, and if he does not like to state it himself I will do so for him."

"There is no occasion for your taking that trouble," said Jacques, who seemed to find a relief in talking himself rather than be compelled

to sit in silence and listen to the ironical praises of his accomplice. "The fact is this, M. l'Abbé, I have reflected upon our purposed undertaking, and it occurs to me that it would be more in accordance with a right spirit of humility and Christian meekness if the projected establishment were instituted in your name, and not in mine."

"Nay, nay!" exclaimed the abbé, "such humility is exaggerated beyond all reasonable scruples. You may fairly pride yourself upon



having originated so noble a charity, and it becomes your just right, as well as your duty, to give it your own name."

"Pardon me for insisting in this instance on having my own way. I have thought the matter well over, and am resolved upon preserving a strict incognito as to being the founder of the undertaking. I therefore venture to hope you will do me the favour to act for me, and carry the scheme into execution, selecting the various functionaries requisite for its

several departments (I merely desire to have the nomination of the chief clerk and one of the doorkeepers). To this kindness you must add the most inviolable secrecy as regards myself."

"Independently of the pleasure it would afford me to co-operate in such a work as yours, my duty to my fellow creatures would not permit me to do otherwise than accede to your wishes; you may therefore reckon upon me in every way you desire."

"Then, with your permission, M. l'Abbé, my friend will read you the plan he has decided on adopting."

"Perhaps," said Jacques Ferrand, bitterly, "you will spare me the fatigue of reading it, by taking that office on yourself? You will oblige me by so doing, will you not?"

"By no means!" answered Polidori. "The pure philanthropy which dictated the scheme will sound far better from your lips than mine."

"Enough!" interrupted the notary; "I will read it myself."

Polidori, so long the accomplice of Jacques Ferrand, and consequently well acquainted with the black catalogue of his crimes, could not restrain a fiendish smile as he saw the notary compelled in his own despite to read aloud and adopt as his own the words and sentiments so arbitrarily dictated by Rodolph.

"Establishment of the Bank for Workmen out of Employ.

"We are instructed to '*Love one another!*' These divine words contain the germ of all charities. They have inspired the humble founder of this institution. Limited as to the means of action, the founder has desired at least to enable as many as possible to participate in what he offers. In the first place, he addresses himself to the honest, hardworking workmen, burdened with families, whom the *want of employment* frequently reduces to the most cruel extremities. It is not a degrading alms which he offers to his brethren, but a gratuitous loan he begs them to accept. And he hopes that this loan may frequently prevent them from involving their future by distressing loans, which they are forced to make in order to await a return of work, their only resource for a family of whom they are the sole support. As a guarantee of this *loan* he only requires from his brethren an undertaking *on honour, and a keeping of the word pledged.* He invests a sum producing an annual income of twelve thousand francs, and to this amount *loans of twenty to forty francs*, without interest, will be advanced to *married men out of work.* These loans will only be made to workmen or workwomen with certificates of good conduct given by the last employer, who will mention the cause and date of the suspension from labour. These loans to be repaid monthly by one-sixths' or one-tenths', at the option of the borrower, *beginning from the day when he again procures employment.* He must sign a simple engagement, on his honour, to return the loan at the periods fixed. This engagement must be also signed by two fellow-workmen as guarantees, in order to develope and extend by their conjunction the sacredness of the promise sworn to. The workman and his two sureties who do not return the sum borrowed, must never again have another loan, having forfeited his sacred engagement, and, especially, having deprived so many of his brethren of the advantage he has enjoyed, as the sum he has not repaid

is for ever lost to the Bank for the Poor. The sums lent being, on the contrary, scrupulously repaid, the *loans* will augment from year to year. Not to degrade man by a loan, not to encourage idleness by an unprofitable gift, to increase the sentiments of honour and probity natural to the labouring classes, to come paternally to the aid of the workman, who, already living with difficulty from day to day, owing to the insufficiency of wages, cannot, when work stops, *suspend* the wants of himself and family because his labour is suspended. These are the thoughts which have presided over this institution. May His Holy Name who has said '*Love one another!*' be alone *glorified!*"

"Ah, sir!" exclaimed the abbé, "what a charitable idea! Now I understand your emotion on reading these lines of such touching simplicity."

In truth, as he concluded the reading, the voice of Jacques Ferrand had faltered, his patience and courage were at an end; but, watched by Polidori, he dared not infringe Rodolph's slightest order.

"M. l'Abbé, is not Jacques' idea excellent?" asked Polidori.

"Ah, sir! I, who know all the wretchedness of the city, can more easily comprehend of what importance may be for poor workmen out of employ a loan which may seem so trifling to the happy in this world! Ah! what good may be done if persons but knew that with thirty or forty francs, which would be scrupulously repaid, if without interest, they might often save the future, and sometimes the honour of a family, whom the want of work places in the grasp of misery and want."

"Jacques values your praises, Monsieur l'Abbé," replied Polidori. "And you will have still more to say to him when you hear of his institution of a gratuitous Mont-de-Piété (pawnbroking establishment), for Jacques has not forgotten this, but made it an adjunct to his Bank for the Poor."

"Can it be true?" exclaimed the priest, clasping his hands in admiration.

The notary contrived to read with a rapid voice the other details, which referred to loans to workmen whose labour was suspended by fatigue or illness, and *his* intention to establish a Bank for the Poor producing twenty-five thousand francs a-year for advances on pledges, which were never to go beyond ten francs for each pledge, without any charges for interest. The management and office of the loans in the Bank for the Poor was to be in the Rue du Temple, Number 17, in a house bought for the purpose. An income of ten thousand francs a-year was to be devoted to the costs and management of the Bank for the Poor, whose manager was to be ——"

Polidori here interrupted the notary, and said to the priest,—

"You will see, sir, by the choice of the manager, that Jacques knows how to repair an involuntary error. You know that by a mistake, which he deeply deplores, he had falsely accused his cashier of embezzling a sum which he afterwards found. Well, it is this honest fellow, François Germain by name, that Jacques has named as manager of the institution, with four thousand francs a-year salary. Is it not admirable, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

"Nothing now can astonish me, or rather nothing ever astonished me

so much before," the priest replied; "the fervent piety, the virtues of our worthy friend, could only have such a result sooner or later. To devote his whole fortune to so admirable an institution is most excellent!"

"More than a million of francs (40,000*l.*), M. l'Abbé," said Polidori; "more than a million, amassed by order, economy, and probity! And there were so many wretches who accused Jacques of avarice! By what

they said, his business brings him in fifty or sixty thousand francs a-year, and yet he leads a life of privations!"

"To that I would reply," said the abbé, with enthusiasm, "that during fifteen years he lived like a beggar, in order one day to console those in distress most gloriously."

"But be at least proud and joyful at the good you do," cried Polidori, addressing Jacques Ferrand, who, gloomy, beaten, and with his eye fixed, seemed absorbed in painful meditation.

"Alas!" said the abbé, in a tone of sorrow, "it is not in this world that one receives the recompense of so many virtues! There is a higher ambition."

"Jacques," said Polidori, lightly touching the notary's shoulder, "finish reading your prospectus."

The notary started, passed his hand across his forehead, and, addressing himself to the priest, "Your pardon, M. l'Abbé," said he, "but I was lost in thought; I felt myself involuntarily carried away by the idea of how immensely the funds of this '*Bank for the Poor*' might be augmented if the sums lent out were, when repaid, allowed to accumulate only for a year. At the end of four years, the institution would be in a condition to afford loans, either wholly, gratuitously, or upon security, to the amount of fifty thousand crowns! Enormous! And I am delighted to find it so," continued he, as he reflected, with concealed rage, on the value of the

sacrifice he was compelled to make. He then added, "A revenue of ten thousand francs will be secured for the expenses and management of the '*Bank for unemployed Workmen*,' whose perpetual director shall be François Germain; and the housekeeper, the present porter in the place, an individual named Pipelet. M. l'Abbé Dumont, in whose hands the necessary funds for carrying out the undertaking will be placed, will establish a board of superintendence, composed of the magistrate of the district and other legal functionaries, in addition to all such influential personages whose patronage and support may be likely to advance the interests of the '*Poor Man's Bank;*' for the founder would esteem himself more than paid for the little he has done, should his example induce other charitable persons to come forward in aid of his work."

"The opening of 'the bank' will be duly announced by every channel calculated to give publicity."

"In conclusion, the founder has only to disclaim any desire to attract notoriety or draw down applause, his sole motive being an earnest wish to re-echo the divine precept of 'LOVE YE ONE ANOTHER!'"

The notary had now concluded; and without making any reply to the congratulations of the abbé, he proceeded to furnish him with the cash and notes requisite for the very considerable outlay required in carrying out the institution just described, and purchasing the annuity for Morel; after which, he said, "Let me hope, M. l'Abbé, that you will not refuse the fresh mission confided to your charity. There is, indeed, a stranger, one Sir Walter Murphy, who has given me the benefit of his advice in drawing up the plan I have lately read to you, who will in some degree relieve you of the entire burden of this affair; and this very day he purposes conversing with you on the best means of bringing our schemes to bear, as well as to place himself at your disposal whenever he can render you the slightest service. To him you may speak freely and without any reserve, but to all others I pray of you to preserve the strictest secrecy as regards myself."

"You may rely on me. But you are surely ill! Tell me, my excellent friend, is it bodily or mental pain that thus blanches your cheek? Are you ill?"

"Somewhat indisposed, M. l'Abbé; the fatigue of reading that long paper, added to the emotions called up by your gratifying praises, have combined to overcome me; and indeed I have been a great sufferer during the last few days. Pray excuse me," said Jacques Ferrand, as he threw himself back languidly in his chair; "I do not apprehend any serious consequences from my present weakness, but must own I do feel quite exhausted."

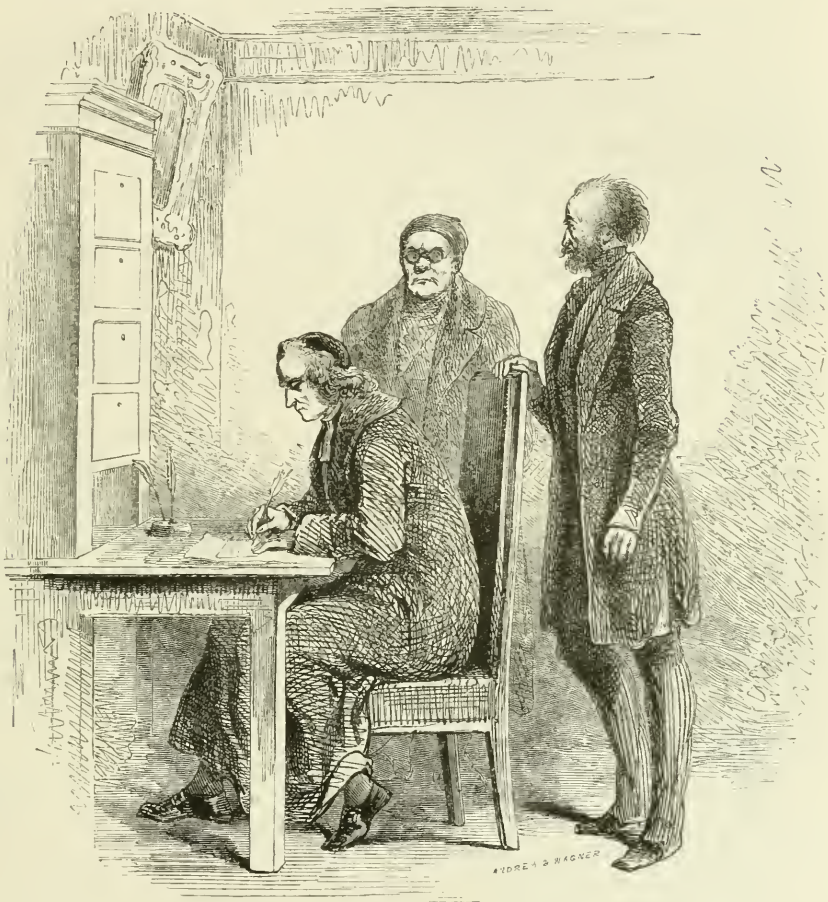
"Perhaps," said the priest, kindly, "your best plan would be to retire to bed, and allow your physician to see you."

"I am a physician, M. l'Abbé," said Polidori; "the condition of my friend Jacques requires the greatest care, and I shall immediately do my best to relieve his present symptoms."

The notary shuddered.

"Well, well," said the curé, "let us hope that a little rest is all you require to set you to rights! I will now take my leave; but first let me give you an acknowledgment for the money I have received."

While the priest was writing the receipt, a look wholly impossible to describe passed between Jacques Ferrand and Polidori.



"Come, come," said the priest, as he handed the paper he had written to Jacques Ferrand, "be of good cheer! Depend upon it, it will be long ere so faithful and devout a servant is suffered to quit a life so usefully and religiously employed. I will come again to-morrow, and inquire how you are. Adieu, monsieur! Farewell, my good, my holy, and excellent friend!"

And with these words the priest quitted the apartment, leaving Jacques Ferrand and Polidori alone there. No sooner was the door closed than a fearful imprecation burst from the lips of Jacques Ferrand, whose rage and despair, so long and forcibly repressed, now broke forth with redoubled fury. Breathless and excited, he continued, with wild

and haggard looks, to pace to and fro like a furious tiger going the length of his chain, and then again retracing his infuriated march; while Polidori, preserving the most imperturbable look and manner, gazed on him with insulting calmness.

"Damnation!" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, at last, in a voice of concentrated wrath and violence; "the idea of my fortune being thus swallowed up in founding these humbugging philanthropic institutions, and to be obliged to give away my riches in such absurdities as building banks for other people! Your master must be the fiend himself to torture a man as he is doing me!"

"I have no master," replied Polidori, coldly; "only, like yourself, I have a judge whose decrees there is no escaping!"

"But thus blindly and idiotically to follow the most trifling order of this man!" continued Jacques Ferrand, with redoubled rage—"to compel me, constrain me, to the very actions most galling and hateful to me!"

"Nay, you have your chance between obedience and the scaffold!"

"And to think that there should be no way to escape this accursed domination! to be obliged to part with such a sum as that I lately handed over to that old proser—a million sterling! The very extent of all my earthly possessions are now this house and about 100,000 francs. What more can he want with me?"

"Oh, but you have not done yet! The prince has learned, through Badinot, that your man of straw, '*Petit Jean*,' was only your own assumed title, under which you made so many usurious loans to the Count de Remy, whom you so roughly took to task for his forgeries. The sums repaid by Saint-Remy were supplied him by a lady of high rank; and you may, very probably, be called upon to make a second restitution in that case, as well as the former: however, you may escape that in consequence of the fear entertained of wounding the delicacy of the noble lender, were the facts brought before the public."

"And fixed, chained here!"

"As firmly as though bound by an iron cable!"

"With such a wretch as you for my gaoler!"

"Why, it is the prince's system to punish crime by crime—the guilty by the hand of his accomplice. So how can you object to me?"

"Oh, rage!"

"But, unhappily, powerless rage; for until he sends me his orders to permit you to leave this house, I shall follow you like your shadow! I, like yourself, have placed my head in danger of falling on the scaffold; and should I fail to perform my prescribed task of gaoler, there it would quickly fall: so that, you perceive, my integrity as your keeper is necessarily incorruptible. And as for our both attempting to free ourselves by flight, that is wholly impossible: not a step could we take without immediately falling into the hands of those who, day and night, keep vigilant watch around and at each door of this house."

"Death and fury!—I know it."

"Then resign yourself to what is inevitable; for if even flight were practicable, what would it do for our ultimate safety? We should be hunted down by the officers of justice, and speedily overtaken, with certain death before us; while, on the contrary, by your submitting and

my superintending your obedience, we are quite sure to keep our heads on our shoulders."

"Do not exasperate me by this cool irony, or——"

"Well! go on—or what? Oh, bless you, I am not afraid of you or your anger; but I know you too well not to adopt every precaution. I am well armed, I can tell you; and though you may have possessed yourself of the celebrated poisoned stiletto carried by Cecily, it would not be worth your while to try its power on me. You are aware that I am obliged, every two hours, to send to *him who has a right to demand it* a bulletin of your precious health! Should I not present myself with the required document, murder would be suspected, and you be taken into custody. But I wrong you in supposing you capable of such a crime. Is it likely that, after sacrificing more than a million of money to save your life, you would place it in danger for the poor satisfaction of avenging yourself on me by taking my life? No, no! you are not quite such a fool as that, at any rate!"

"Oh, misery, misery! endless and inextricable! Whichever way I turn, I see nothing but death or disgrace! My curse be on you—on all mankind!"

"Your misanthropy, then, exceeds your philanthropy; for while the former embraces the whole world, the latter merely relates to a small part of Paris."

"Go on, go on, monster!—mock as you will!"

"Would you rather I should overwhelm you with reproaches? Whose fault is it but yours that we are placed in our present position? Why would you persist in hanging that letter of mine relative to the murder I assisted you in, which gained you 100,000 crowns, although you contrived to make it appear the man had fallen by his own hand?—why, I say, did you keep that letter of mine suspended round your neck, as though it had been a holy relic, instead of the confession of a crime?"

"Why, you contemptible being! Why, because having handed over to you 50,000 francs for your share and assistance in the deed, I exacted from you that letter containing an admission of your participation in the affair, in order that I might have that security for your playing me fair; for, with that document in existence, to betray me would have been to denounce yourself. That letter was the security, both for my life and fortune. Now are you answered as to my reasons for keeping it so carefully about me?"

"I see!—it was skilfully devised on your part, for by betraying you I gained nothing but the certainty of perishing with you on the same scaffold; and yet your cleverness has ruined us, while mine has assured our safety up to the present moment."

"Great safety, certainly, if our present situation is taken into consideration!"

"Who could foresee the turn things have taken? But, according to the ordinary course of events, our crime would have remained for ever under the same veil of concealment my management had thrown over it."

"Your management?"

"Even so! Why, do you not recollect that, after we had killed the man, you were for merely counterfeiting his writing, in order to despatch

a letter as if from himself to his sister, stating his intention of committing suicide in consequence of having utterly ruined himself by losses at play? You believed it a great stroke of policy not to make any mention, in this letter, of the money intrusted to your charge. This was absurd, because the sister, being aware of the deposit left in your hands, would be sure to claim it; it was wiser to take the contrary path, and make mention, as we did, of the money deposited with you; so that, should any suspicions arise as to the manner in which the murdered man met his death, you would be the very last on whom suspicion could fall: for how could it be supposed for an instant that you would first kill a man to obtain possession of the treasure placed under your care, and then write to inform the sister of the fact of the money having been lodged with you? And what was the consequence of this skilful suggestion on my part? Every one believed the dead man had destroyed himself. Your high reputation for probity enabled you successfully to deny the circumstance of any such sum of money as that claimed ever having been placed in your hands; and the general impression was, that the unprincipled brother had first dissipated his sister's fortune, and then committed suicide."

"But what does all this matter now, since the crime is discovered?"

"And who is to be thanked for its discovery? Is it my fault if my letter has become a sort of two-edged sword? Why were you so weak, so silly, as to surrender so formidable a weapon to — that infernal Cecily?"

"Silence!" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, with a fearful expression of countenance; "name her not!"

"With all my heart! I don't want to bring on an attack of epilepsy. You see plainly enough that, as regards the common course of ordinary justice, our mutual precautions were quite sufficient to ensure our safety; but he who now holds us in his formidable power goes to work differently: he believes that cutting off the heads of criminals is not a sufficient reparation for the wrongs they have done. With the proofs he has against us, he might give you and myself up to the laws of our country; but what would be got by that? Merely a couple of dead bodies, to help to enrich the churchyard."

"True, true! This prince, devil, or demon — whichever he is — requires tears, groans, wringings of the heart, ere he is satisfied. And yet 'tis strange he should work so much woe for me, who know him not, neither have ever done him the least harm. Why, then, is he so bitter against me?"

"In the first place, because he professes to sympathise with the sufferings of other men, whom he calls, simply enough, his brethren; and, secondly, because he knows those you have injured, and he punishes you according to his ideas."

"But what right has he to exercise any such power over me?"

"Why, look you, Jacques! between ourselves it is not worth while to question the right of a man who might legally consign us to a scaffold. But what would be the result? Your two only relations are both dead; consequently government would profit by your wealth, to the injury of those you have wronged. On the other hand, by making your fortune the price of your life, Morel (the father of the unhappy girl you disho-

noured), with his numerous family, may be placed beyond the reach of want; Madame de Fermont, the sister of the pretended self-murderer Renneville, will get back her 100,000 crowns; Germain, falsely accused by you of robbery, will be reinstated in life, and placed at the head of the '*Bank for distressed Workmen*,' which you are compelled to found and endow as an expiation for your many offences against society. And, candidly looking at the thing in the same point of view as he who now holds us in his clutches, it must be owned that, though mankind would have gained nothing by your death, they will be considerably advantaged by your life."

"And this it is excites my rage, that forms my greatest torture!"

"The prince knows that as well as you do. And what is he going to do with us after all?—I know not. He promised us our lives, if we would blindly comply with all his orders; but if he should not consider our past offences sufficiently expiated, he will find means to make death itself preferable a thousand times to the existence he grants us. You don't know him. When he believes himself called upon to be stern, no executioner can be more inexorable and unpitying to the criminal his hand must deprive of life. He must have had some fiend at his elbow, to discover what I went into Normandy for. However, he has more than one demon at his command; for that Cecily, whom may the descending lightning strike to the earth——"

"Again I say, silence! Name her not!—utter not the word Cecily!"

"I tell you I wish that every curse may light upon her! And have I not good reason for hating one who has placed us in our present situation? But for her, our heads would be safe on our shoulders, and likely to remain so. To what has your besotted passion for that creature brought us!"

Instead of breaking out into a fresh rage, Jacques Ferrand replied, with the most extreme dejection, "Do you know the person you are speaking of? Tell me, have you ever seen her?"

"Never! but I am aware she is reported to be very beautiful."

"Beautiful!" exclaimed the notary, emphatically; then, with an expression of bitter despair, he added, "Cease to speak of that you know not. What I did you would have done if similarly tempted."

"What! endanger my life for the love of a woman?"

"For such a one as Cecily; and I tell you candidly that I would do the same thing again, for the same hopes as then led me on."

"By all the devils in hell," cried Polidori, in utter amazement, "he is bewitched!"

"Hearken to me," resumed the notary, in a low, calm tone, occasionally rendered more energetic by the bursts of uncontrollable despair which possessed his mind. "Listen! You know how much I love gold, as well as all I have ventured to acquire it. To count over in my thoughts the sums I possessed—to see them doubled by my avarice—to know myself master of immense wealth—was at once my joy, my happiness: to possess, not for the sake of expending or enjoying, but to hoard, to gloat over, was my life, my delight. A month ago, had I been told to choose between my fortune and my head, I should certainly have sacrificed the latter to save the former."

"But what would be the use of *possessing* all this wealth, if you must die?"

"The ecstasy of dying in the consciousness of its *possession*—to enjoy till the last moment the dear delightful feeling of being the owner of those riches for which you have braved every thing—privations, disgrace, infamy, the scaffold itself—to be able to say, even as you lay your head on the fatal block, 'Those vast treasures are mine!' Oh, death is far sweeter than to endure the living agonies I suffer at seeing the riches accumulated with so much pain, difficulties, and dangers, torn from me! Dreadful, dreadful! 'Tis not dying daily, but each minute in the day; and this dreadful state of misery may be protracted for years! Oh, how greatly should I prefer being struck down by that sudden and rapid death that carries you off ere one fragment of your beloved riches is taken from you! for still, with your dying breath, you might sigh forth, 'Those

treasures are mine!—all, all mine! None but me can or dare approach them!'"

Polidori gazed on his accomplice with profound astonishment. "I do not understand you," said he, at last; "if such be the case, why have you obeyed the commands of him whose denunciation of you would bring you to a scaffold? Why, if life be so horrible to you, have you chosen to accept it at his hands, and pay the heavy price you are doing for it?"

"Because," answered the notary, in a voice that sunk so low as to be scarcely audible, "because death brings forgetfulness—annihilation—and then, too, Cecily——"

"What!" said Polidori, "do you still hope?"

"No," said the notary, "I *possess*——"

"What?"

"The fond impassioned remembrance of her."

"But what folly is this, when you are sure never to see her more, and when she has brought you to a scaffold!"

"That matters not; I love her even more ardently, more frantically than ever!" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, amid a torrent of sighs and sobs that contrasted strongly with the previous gloomy dejection of his last remark. "Yes," continued he, with fearful wildness, "I love her too well to be willing to die, while I can feast my senses upon the recollection only of that night—that memorable night, in which I saw her so lovely, so loving, so fascinating! Never is her image, as I then beheld her, absent from my brain; waking or sleeping, she is ever before me, decked in all the intoxicating beauty that was displayed to my impassioned gaze! Still do her large lustrous eyes seem to dart forth their fiery glances, and I almost fancy I can feel her warm breath on my cheek, while her clear melodious voice seems ringing its full sounds into my ear with promises of bliss, alas! never to be mine. Yet, though to live thus is torturing—horrible—yet would I prefer it to the apathy, the still nothingness of the grave. No, no, no! let me live, poor, wretched, despised—a branded galley-slave, if you will—but give me yet the means of doating in secret on the recollection of this wonderful being: whether she be fiend or angel, yet does she engross my every thought!"

"Jacques!" said Polidori, in a voice and manner contrasting strongly with his habitual tone of cool, provoking sarcasm, "I have witnessed almost every description of bodily and mental suffering, but certainly nothing that equalled what you endure. He who holds us in his power could not have devised more cruel torture than that you are compelled to endure. You are condemned to live, to await death through a vista of long wasting torments, for your description of your feelings fully explains to me the many alarming symptoms I have observed in you from day to day, and of which I have hitherto vainly sought to find the cause."

"But the symptoms you speak of as alarming are nothing but exhaustion, a sort of reaction of the bodily and mental powers; do you not think so? Tell me! I am not surely in any danger of dying?"

"There is no *immediate* danger, but your situation is precarious; and there are some thoughts you must cease to dwell on—nay, banish from your memory—or your danger is imminent."

"I will do whatever you bid me, so that my life be preserved—for I

will not die! Oh, let priests talk of the sufferings of the damned!—but what are their tortures compared to mine? Tormented alike by passion and avarice, I have two open wounds rankling in my heart, each occasioning mortal agony. The loss of my fortune is dreadful, but the fear of death is even still more so. I have desired to live; and though my existence may probably be but one protracted scene of endless wretchedness, it is preferable to death and annihilation; for it would be the termination of my fatal happiness—the power of recalling each word and look of Cecily!"

"You have at least one vast consolation," said Polidori, resuming his accustomed *sang froid*, "in the recollection of the good actions by which you have sought to expiate your crimes!"

"Rail on!—mock my misery!—turn me on the hot coals on which my ill fortune has placed me! But you well know, mean and contemptible being that you are, how I hate, how I loathe all mankind, and that these forced expiations to which I am condemned only serve to increase my detestation of those who compel me to make them, and those who profit by them. By all that is sacred, it passes human malice to condemn me to live in endless misery, such as would dismay the stoutest nature, while my fellow-creatures, as they are called, have all their griefs assuaged at the cost of my dearly prized treasures! Oh, that priest who but now quitted us, loading me with blessings while my heart seemed like one vast ocean of fiery gall and bitterness against himself and all mankind—oh, how I longed to plunge a dagger in his breast! 'Tis too much—too much for endurance!" cried he, pressing his clenched hands to his forehead; "my brain burns—my ideas become confused—I shall not be

able much longer to resist these violent attacks of impotent, futile rage—these unending tortures; and all through you, Cecily—fatal, adored Cecily! Will you ever know all the agonies I have borne on your account, and will you still haunt me with that mocking smile? Cecily, Cecily! back to the fiends from whom you sprung, and drive me not to destruction!"

All at once a hasty knock was heard at the door of the apartment. Polidori immediately opened it, and perceived the principal clerk in the notary's office, who, pale and much agitated, exclaimed, "I must speak with M. Ferrand directly!"

"Hush!" answered Polidori, in a low tone, as he came forth from the room and shut the door after him; "he is very ill just now, and cannot be disturbed on any account."

"Then do you, sir, who are M. Ferrand's best and most intimate friend, step forward to help and assist him; but come quickly, for there is not an instant to be lost!"

"What has happened?"

"By M. Ferrand's orders, I went to-day to the house of the Countess MacGregor, to say that he was unable to wait on her to-day, according to her request. This lady, who seems quite out of danger at present, sent for me to her chamber; when I went in, she exclaimed, in an angry, threatening manner, 'Go back to M. Ferrand, and say to him, that if he is not here in half an hour, or at least before the close of the day, he shall be arrested for felony. The child he passed off as dead is still living; I know into whose hands he gave her up, and I also know where she is at this present minute.'"

"This lady must be out of her senses," cried Polidori, shrugging up his shoulders. "Poor thing!"

"I should have thought so myself, but for the confident manner in which the countess spoke."

"I have no doubt but that her illness has affected her head; and persons labouring under any delusion are always impressed with the most perfect conviction of the truth of their fancies."

"I ought also to state, that just as I was leaving the room, one of the countess's female attendants entered all in a hurry, and said, '*His highness* will be here in an hour's time!'"

"You are sure you heard those words?" asked Polidori.

"Quite, quite sure, sir! and I remember it the more, because I immediately began wondering in my own mind what *highness* she could mean."

"It is quite clear," said Polidori, mentally, "she expects the prince; but how comes that about? What strange course of events can have induced him to visit one he ought never again to meet? I know not why, but I greatly mistrust this renewal of intimacy. Our position, bad as it is, may even be rendered still worse by it." Then, addressing himself to the clerk, he added, "Depend upon it there is nothing of any consequence in the message you have brought; 'tis merely the effects of a wandering imagination on the part of the countess; but, to prevent your feeling any uneasiness, I promise to acquaint M. Ferrand with it directly he is well enough to converse upon any matter of business."

We shall now conduct the reader to the house of the Countess Sarah MacGregor.

CHAPTER LII.

RODOLPH AND SARAH.

A SALUTARY crisis had occurred, which relieved the Countess Macgregor from the delirium and suffering under which, for several days, her life had been despaired of.

The day had begun to break when Sarah, seated in a large easy chair,

and supported by her brother Thomas Seyton, was looking at herself in a mirror which one of her women on her knees held up before her. This was in the apartment where La Chouette had made the attempt to murder.

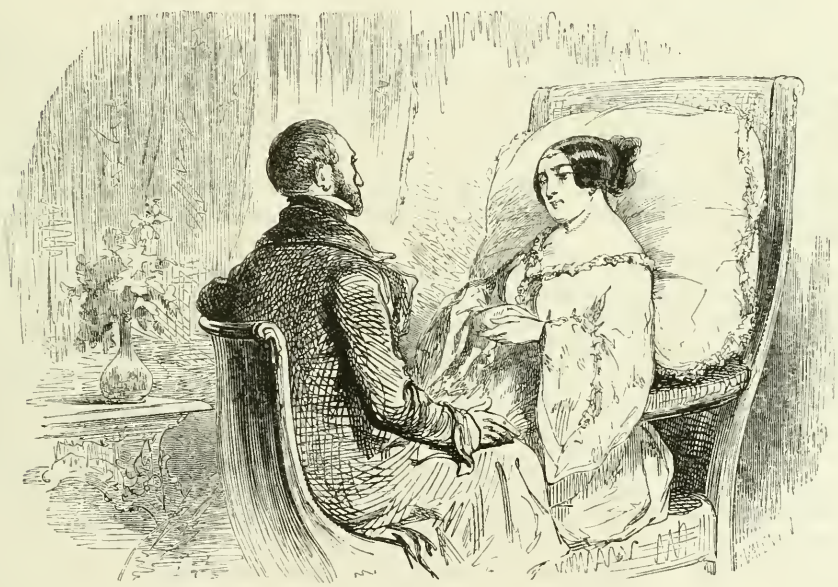
The countess was as pale as marble, and her pallor made her dark eyes, hair, and eyebrows even more striking; and she was attired in a dressing-gown of white muslin. "Give me my bandeau of coral," she said to one of her women, in a voice which, although weak, was imperious and abrupt.

"Betty will fasten it on for you," said Seyton; "you will exhaust yourself; you are already very imprudent."

"The bandeau—the bandeau!" repeated Sarah, impatiently, who took this jewel and arranged it on her brow. "Now fasten it, and leave me!" she said to the women.

The instant they were retiring, she said, "Let M. Ferrand be shewn into the little blue *salon*." Then she added, with ill-dissembled pride, "As soon as his royal highness the Grand Duke of Gerolstein comes, let him be introduced instantly to this apartment."

"At length," said Sarah, as soon as she was alone with her brother, "at length I trust this crown—the dream of my life: the prediction is on the eve of fulfilment!"



"Sarah, calm your excitement!" said her brother to her; "yesterday your life was despaired of, and to be again disappointed would deal you a mortal blow!"

"You are right, Thomas; the fall would be fearful, for my hopes were never nearer realisation! Of this I feel assured, for it was my constant thought of profiting by the overwhelming revelation which this woman made me at the moment of her assassination that prevented me from sinking under my sufferings."

"Again, Sarah, let me counsel you to beware of such insensate dreams —the awaking would be terrible!"

"Insensate dreams! What, when Rodolph learns that this young girl, who is now locked up in Saint Lazare, and formerly confided to the notary, who has passed her off for dead, is our child! Do you suppose that——"

Seyton interrupted his sister. "I believe," he said, bitterly, "that princes place reasons of state, political conveniences, before natural duties."

"Do you then rely so little on my address?"

"The prince is no longer the ingenuous and impassioned youth whom you attracted and swayed in other days; that time is long ago, both for him and for you, sister."

Sarah shrugged her shoulders, and said, "Do you know why I was desirous of placing this bandeau of coral in my hair?—why I put on this white dress? It is because the first time Rodolph saw me at the court of Gerolstein I was dressed in white, and wore this very bandeau of coral in my hair."

"What!" said Seyton, "you would awake those remembrances? Do you not rather fear their influence?"

"I know Rodolph better than you do. No doubt my features, changed by time and sufferings, are no longer those of the young girl of sixteen, whom he so madly loved—only loved—for I was his first love; and that love, unique in the life of man, always leaves ineffaceable traces in the heart. Thus, then, brother, trust me that the sight of this ornament will awaken in Rodolph not only the recollection of his love, but those of his youth also; and for men these souvenirs are always sweet and precious."

"But these sweet and precious souvenirs will be united with others so terrible: the sinister *dénoûment* of your love—the detestable behaviour of the prince's father to you—your obstinate silence to Rodolph. After your marriage with the Count Macgregor, he demanded his daughter, then an infant—your child—of whose death, ten years since, you informed him so coldly in your letter. Do you forget that from that period the prince has felt nothing but contempt and hatred for you?"

"Pity has replaced his hatred. Since he has learnt that I am dying, he has sent the Baron de Graün every day to inquire after me; and just now he has promised to come here; and that is an immense concession, brother."

"He believes you dying—that you desire a last adieu—and so he comes. You were wrong not to write to him of the discovery you are about to disclose to him."

"I know why I do so. This discovery will fill him with surprise—joy—and I shall be present to profit by his first burst of softened feeling. To-day or never he will say to me, '*A marriage must legitimise the birth of our child!*' If he says so, his word is sacred, and then will the hope of my life be realised!"

"Yes, if he makes you the promise."

"And that he may do so, nothing must be neglected under these decisive circumstances. I know Rodolph; and once having found his

daughter, he will overcome his aversion for me, and will not retreat from any sacrifice to assure her the most enviable lot, to make her as entirely happy as she has been until now wretched."

"However brilliant the destiny he may assure to your daughter, there is, between the reparation to her and the resolution to marry you in order to legitimise the birth of this child, a very wide abyss."

"Her father will pass over this abyss."

"But this unfortunate child has, perhaps, been so vitiated by the misery in which she has lived, that the prince, instead of feeling attracted towards her——"

"What are you saying?" cried Sarah, interrupting her brother. "Is she not as handsome, as a young girl, as she was a lovely infant? Rodolph, without knowing her, was so deeply interested in her as to take charge of her future destiny, and sent her to his farm at Bouqueval, whence we carried her off."

"Yes, thanks to your obstinacy in desiring to break all the ties of the prince's affection, in the foolish hope of one day leading him back to yourself!"

"And yet, but for this foolish hope, I should not have discovered, at the price of my life, the secret of my daughter's existence. Is it not through this woman, who had carried her off from the farm, that I have learned the infamous deceit of the notary, Ferrand?"

"It would have been better to have awaited the young creature's coming out of prison, before you sent to request the Grand Duke to come here."

"Awaited! And do I know that the salutary crisis in which I now am will last until to-morrow? Perhaps I am but momentarily sustained by my ambition only."

"What proofs have you for the prince, and will he believe you?"

"He will believe me when he reads the commencement of the disclosure which I wrote from the dictation of that woman who stabbed me—a disclosure of which I have, fortunately, forgotten no circumstance. He will believe me when he reads your correspondence with Madame Séraphin and Jacques Ferrand, as to the supposed death of the child—he will believe me when he hears the confession of the notary, who, alarmed at my threats, will come here immediately—he will believe me when he sees the portrait of my daughter at six years of age, a portrait which the woman told me was still a striking resemblance. So many proofs will suffice to convince the prince that I speak the truth, and to decide him as to his first impulse, which will make me almost a queen. Oh, if it were but for a day, I could die content!"

At this moment a carriage was heard to enter the court-yard.

"It is he!—it is Rodolph!" exclaimed Sarah.

Thomas Seyton drew a curtain hastily aside, and replied, "Yes, it is the prince; he is just alighting from the carriage."

"Leave me!—this is the decisive moment!" said Sarah, with unshaken coolness; for a monstrous ambition, a pitiless selfishness, had always been and still was the only moving spring of this woman. Even in the almost miraculous reappearance of her daughter, she only saw a means of at last arriving at the one end and aim of her whole existence.

Seyton said to her, "I will tell the prince how your daughter, believed dead, was saved. This conversation would be too dangerous for you—a too violent emotion would kill you; and after so long a separation, the sight of the prince, the recollection of bygone times——"

"Your hand, brother!" replied Sarah. Then, placing on her impassive heart Tom Seyton's hand, she added, with an icy smile, "Am I excited?"

"No, no! not even a hurried pulsation," said Seyton, amazed. "I know not what control you have over yourself; but at such a moment, when it is for a crown or a coffin you play, your calmness amazes me!"

"And wherefore, brother? Till now, you know, nothing has made my heart beat hastily; and it will only throb when I feel the sovereign crown upon my brow. I hear Rodolph—leave me!"

When Rodolph entered the apartment, his look expressed pity; but, seeing Sarah seated in her arm-chair, and, as it were, full dressed, he recoiled in surprise, and his features became gloomy and mistrustful. The countess, guessing his thoughts, said to him, in a low and faint voice, "You thought to find me dying!—you came to receive my last adieu!"

"I have always considered the last wishes of the dead as sacred, but it appears now as if there were some sacrilegious deceit——"

"Be assured," said Sarah, interrupting Rodolph,—"be assured that I have not deceived you! I believe that I have but very few hours to live. Pardon me a last display of coquetry! I wished to spare you the gloomy symptoms that usually attend the dying hour, and to die attired as I was the first time I saw you. Alas! after ten years of separation, I see you once again! Thanks, oh thanks! But in your turn give thanks to God for having inspired you with the thought of hearing my last prayer! If you had refused me, I should have carried my secret with me to the grave, which will now cause the joy, the happiness of your life—joy, mingled with some sadness—happiness, mingled with some tears, like all human felicity; but this felicity you would yet purchase at the price of half the remainder of your existence!"

"What do you mean?" asked the prince, with great amazement.

"Yes, Rodolph, if you had not come, this secret would have followed me to the tomb! That would have been my sole vengeance. And yet, no, no!—I shall not have the courage. Although you have made me suffer deeply, I yet must have shared with you that supreme happiness which you, more blessed than myself, will, I hope, long enjoy!"

"Madame, what does this mean?"

"When you know, you will be able to comprehend my slowness in informing you, for you will view it as a miracle from heaven; but, strange to say, I, who with a word can cause you pleasure greater than you have ever experienced—I experience, although the minutes of my life are counted—I experience an indefinable satisfaction at prolonging your expectation. And then, I know your heart; and in spite of the fierceness of your character, I fear, without preparation, to reveal to you so incredible a discovery. The emotions of overwhelming joy have also their dangers."

"Your paleness increases—you can scarcely repress your violent agitation," said Rodolph; "all this indicates something grave and solemn."

"Grave and solemn!" replied Sarah, in an agitated voice; for, in spite of her habitual impassiveness, when she reflected on the immense effect of the disclosure she was about to make to Rodolph, she was more troubled than she believed possible; and, unable any longer to restrain herself, she exclaimed, "Rodolph, our daughter lives!"

"Our daughter!"

"Lives, I say!"

These words, the accents of truth in which they were pronounced, shook the prince to his very heart. "Our child!" he repeated, going hurriedly to the chair in which Sarah was,—"our child—my daughter!"

"Is not dead, I have irresistible proof; I know where she is—to-morrow you shall see her."

"My daughter!—my daughter!" repeated Rodolph, with amazement,

"can it be that she lives?" Then, suddenly reflecting on the improbability of such an event, and fearing to be the dupe of some fresh treachery on Sarah's part, he cried, "No, no, it is a dream!—impossible! I know your ambition—of what you are capable—and I see through the drift of this proposed treachery!"

"Yes, you say truly; I am capable of all—every thing!—yes, I desired to abuse you—some days before the mortal blow was struck, I sought to find out some young girl that I might present to you as our daughter. After this confession, you will perhaps believe me, or, rather, you will be compelled to credit irresistible evidence. Yes, Rodolph, I repeat I desired to substitute a young and obscure girl for her whom we both deplore; but God willed that at the moment when I was arranging this sacrilegious bargain, I should be almost fatally stabbed!"

"You—at this moment!"

"God so willed it that they should propose to me to play the part of falsehood—imagine whom? Our daughter!"

"Are you delirious, in heaven's name?"

"Oh no, I am not delirious! In this casket, containing some papers and a portrait, which will prove to you the truth of what I say, you will find a paper stained with my blood!"

"Your blood!"

"The woman who told me that our daughter was still living declared to me this disclosure when she stabbed me with her dagger."

"And who was she?—how did she know?"

"It was she to whom the child was confided when very young, after she had been declared dead."

"But this woman? Can she be believed? How did you know her?"

"I tell you, Rodolph, that this is all fated—providential! Some months ago you snatched a young girl from misery, to send her to the country. Jealousy and hatred possessed me. I had her carried off by the woman of whom I have been speaking."

"And they took the poor girl to Saint Lazare?"

"Where she is still."

"She is there no longer. Ah! you do not know, madame, the fearful evil you have occasioned me by snatching the unfortunate girl away from the retreat in which I had placed her; but——"

"The young girl is no longer at Saint Lazare!" cried Sarah, with dismay; "ah, what fearful news is this!"

"A monster of avarice had an interest in her destruction. They have drowned her, madame! But answer!—you say that——"

"My daughter!" exclaimed Sarah, interrupting Rodolph, and standing erect, as straight and motionless as a statue of marble.

"What does she say? good heaven!" cried Rodolph.

"My daughter!" repeated Sarah, whose features became livid and frightful in their despair—"they have murdered my daughter!"

"The Goualeuse your daughter!" uttered Rodolph, retreating with horror.

"The Goualeuse!—yes, that was the name which the woman they call the Chouette used. Dead—dead!" repeated Sarah, still motionless, with her eyes fixed—"they have killed her!"

"Sarah!" said Rodolph, as pale and as fearful to look upon as the countess; "be calm—recover yourself—answer me! The Goualeuse—the young girl whom you had carried off by the Chouette from Bouqueville—was she our daughter?"

"Yes. And they have killed her!"

"Oh, no, no—you are mad!—it cannot be! You do not know!—no, no—you cannot tell how fearful this would be! Sarah, be firm—speak to me calmly—sit down—compose yourself! There are often

resemblances, appearances which deceive if we are inclined to believe what we desire. I do not reproach you; but explain yourself to me—tell me all the reasons which induce you to think this; for it cannot be—no, no, it cannot be—it is not so!"

After a moment's pause, the countess collected her thoughts, and said to Rodolph, in a faltering voice, "Learning your marriage, and thinking of marrying myself, I could not keep our child with me: she was then four years of age."

"But at that time I begged her of you with prayers, entreaties," cried Rodolph, in a heart-rending tone, "and my letters were unanswered; the only one you wrote to me announced her death!"

"I was desirous of avenging myself of your contempt by refusing your child. It was shameful; but hear me!—I feel my life ebbs from me; this last blow has overcome me!"

"No, no, I do not believe you—I will not believe you! The Goualeuse my daughter! Oh, *mon Dieu!* you would not have this so!"

"Listen to me! When she was four years old, my brother charged Madame Seraphin, the widow of an old servant of his, to bring the child up until she was old enough to go to a school. The sum destined to support our child was deposited by my brother with a notary, celebrated for his honesty. The letters of this man and Madame Seraphin, addressed at the time to me and my brother, are there, in the casket. At the end

of a year they wrote me word that my daughter's health was failing—eight months afterwards that she was dead, and they sent the register of her decease. At this time Madame Seraphin had entered the service of Jacques Ferrand, after having given our daughter over to the Chouette, through the medium of a wretch, who is now at the galleys at Rochefort.

I was writing down all this when the Chouette stabbed me. This paper is there also, with a portrait of our daughter when four years of age. Examine all—letters, declaration, portrait—and you who have seen her, the unhappy child! will judge——"

These words exhausted Sarah, and she fell fainting into her arm-chair.

Rodolph was thunderstruck at this disclosure. There are misfortunes so unforeseen, so horrible, that we try not to believe them until the overwhelming evidence compels us. Rodolph, persuaded of the death of Fleur-de-Marie, had but one hope—that of convincing himself that she was not his daughter. With a frightful calmness that alarmed Sarah, he approached the table, opened the casket, and began to read the letters, examining with scrupulous attention the papers which accompanied them.

These letters, bearing the post-mark, and dated, written to Sarah and her brother by the notary and Madame Seraphin, related to the infancy of Fleur-de-Marie, and the investment of the money destined for her. Rodolph could not doubt the authenticity of this correspondence.

The Chouette's declaration was confirmed by the particulars collected at Rodolph's desire, in which a felon named Pierre Tournemine, then at Rochefort, was described as the individual who had received Fleur-de-Marie from the hands of Madame Seraphin, for the purpose of giving her up to the Chouette—the relentless tormentor of her early years—and whom she afterwards so unexpectedly recognised when in company with Rodolph at the *tapis-franc* of the Ogress.

The attestation of the child's death was duly drawn up and attested, but Ferrand himself had confessed to Cecily that it had merely been

employed to obtain possession of a considerable sum of money due to the unfortunate infant, whose decease it so falsely recorded, and who had subsequently been drowned by his order while crossing to the Isle du Ravageur. It was, therefore, with appalling conviction Rodolph learnt at once the double facts of the Goualeuse being his long-lost daughter, and of her having perished by a violent death. Unfortunately, every thing seemed to give greater certitude to his belief, and to render further doubt impossible. Ere the prince could bring himself to place implicit credence in the self-condemnation of Jacques Ferrand, as conveyed in the notes furnished by him to Cecily, he had made the closest inquiries at Asnières, and had ascertained that two females, one old, the other young, dressed in the garb of countrywomen, had been drowned while crossing the river to the Isle du Ravageur, and that Martial was openly accused of having committed this fresh crime. Let us add, in conclusion, that despite the utmost care and attention on the part of Dr. Griffon, Count de Saint-Rémy, and La Louve, Fleur-de-Marie was long ere she could be pronounced out of danger, and then so extreme was her exhaustion, both of body and mind, that she had been unfit for the least conversation, and wholly unequal to making any effort to apprise Madame Georges of her situation. This coincidence of circumstances left the prince without the smallest shadow of hope; but had such even remained, it was doomed to disappear before a last and fatal proof of the reality of his misfortune. He, for the first time, ventured to cast his eyes towards the miniature he had received. The blow fell with stunning conviction on his heart; for

in the exquisitely beautiful features it revealed, rich in all the infantine loveliness ascribed to cherubic innocence, he recognised the striking portrait of Fleur-de-Marie—her finely-chiselled nose, the lofty forehead, with the small, delicately-formed mouth, even then wearing an expression of sorrowing tenderness. Alas! had not Madame Seraphin well accounted for this somewhat uncommon peculiarity in an infant's face by saying, in a letter written by her to Sarah, which Rodolph had just perused, "*The child is continually inquiring for its mother, and seems to grieve very much at not seeing her.*" There were also those large, soft blue eyes, "*the colour of a blue-bell,*" as the Chouette observed to Sarah, upon recognising in this miniature the features of the unfortunate creature she had so ruthlessly tormented as Pegriotte, and as a young girl under the appellation of La Goualeuse. At the sight of this picture the violent and tumultuous emotions of the prince were lost amid a flood of mingled tears and sighs.

While Rodolph thus indulged his bitter grief, the countenance of Sarah became powerfully agitated; she saw the last hope which had hitherto sustained her of realising the ambitious dreams of her life fade away at the very moment when she had expected their full accomplishment.

All at once Rodolph raised his head, dashed away his tears, and rising from his chair, advanced towards Sarah with folded arms and dignified, determined air. After silently gazing on her for some moments, he said,—

"'Tis fair and right it should be so! I raised my sword against my father's life, and I am stricken through my own child!—the parricide is worthily punished for his sin! Then listen to me, madam! 'Tis fit you should learn in this agonising moment all the evils which have been brought about by your insatiate ambition, your unprincipled selfishness! Listen, then, heartless and unfeeling wife—base and unnatural mother!"

"Mercy, mercy! Rodolph, pity me, and spare me!"

"There is no pity, there can be no pardon for such as you, who coldly trafficked in a love pure and sincere as was mine, with the assumed pretext of sharing a passion generous and devoted as was my own for you. There can be no pity for her who excites the son against the father, no pardon for the unnatural parent who, instead of carefully watching over the infancy of her child abandons it to the care of vile mercenaries, in order to satisfy her grasping avarice by a rich marriage, as you formerly gratified your inordinate ambition by espousing me. No! there is no mercy, pity, or pardon for one who, like yourself, first refuses my child to all my prayers and entreaties, and afterwards, by a series of profane and vile machinations, causes her death! May Heaven's curse light on you, as mine does, thou evil genius of myself and all belonging to me!"

"He has no relenting pity in his heart!—he is deaf to all my appeals! Wretched woman that I am! Oh, leave me—leave me—I beseech!"

"Nay, you shall hear me out! Do you remember our last meeting, now seventeen years ago? You were unable longer to conceal the consequences of our secret marriage, which, like you, I believed indissoluble. I well knew the inflexible character of my father, as well as the political marriage he wished me to form; but braving alike his displeasure and its results, I boldly declared to him that you were my wife before God and man, and that ere long you would bring into the world a proof of our love. My father's rage was terrible: he refused to believe in our union.

Such startling opposition to his will appeared to him impossible; and he threatened me with his heaviest displeasure if I presumed again to insult his ear by the mention of such folly. I then loved you with a passion bordering on madness. Led away by your wiles and artifices, I believed your cold, stony heart felt a reciprocity of tenderness for me, and I therefore unhesitatingly replied that I never would call any woman wife but yourself. At these words his fury knew no bounds. He heaped on you the most insulting epithets, exclaiming that the marriage I talked of was null and void, and that to punish you for your presumption in daring even to think of such a thing, he would have you publicly exposed in the pillory of the city. Yielding alike to the violence of my mad passion and the impetuosity of my disposition, I presumed to forbid him who was at once my parent and my sovereign speaking thus disrespectfully of one I loved far beyond my own life, and I even went so far as to threaten him if he persisted in so doing. Exasperated at my conduct, my father struck me. Blinded by rage, I drew my sword, and threw myself on him with

deadly fury. Happily the intervention of Murphy turned away the blow, and saved me from being as much a parricide in deed as I was in intention. Do you hear me, madam?—a parricide! And in your defence!"

"Alas! I knew not this misfortune."

"In vain have I sought to expiate my crime. This blow to-day is sent by Heaven's avenging hand to repay my heavy crime."

"But have I not sufficiently suffered from the inveterate enmity of your father, who dissolved our marriage? Wherefore add to my misery by doubts of the sincerity of my affection for you?"

"Wherefore?" exclaimed Rodolph, darting on her looks of the most withering contempt. "Learn now my reasons, and cease to wonder at the loathing horror with which you inspire me. After the fatal scene in which I had threatened the life of my father, I surrendered my sword, and was kept in the closest confinement. Polidori, through whose instrumentality our union had been effected, was arrested; and he distinctly proved that our marriage had never been legally contracted, the minister, as well as the other persons concerned in its solemnisation, being merely creatures tutored and bribed by him; so that both you, your brother, and myself, were equally deceived. The more effectually to turn away my father's wrath from himself, Polidori did still more; he gave up one of your letters to your brother, which he had managed to intercept during a journey taken by Seyton."

"Heavens! can it be possible?"

"Can you now account for my contempt and aversion towards you?"

"Too, too well!"

"In this letter you developed your ambitious projects with unblushing effrontery. Me you spoke of with the utmost indifference, treating me but as the blind instrument by which you should arrive at the princely station predicted for you. You expressed your opinion that my father had already lived long enough—perhaps too long; and hinted at probabilities and possibilities too horrible to repeat!"

"Alas! all is now but too apparent. I am lost for ever!"

"And yet to protect you, I had even menaced my father's existence!"

"When he next visited me, and, without uttering one word of reproach, put into my hands your letter, every line of which more clearly revealed the black enormity of your nature, I could but kneel before him and entreat his pardon. But from that hour I have been a prey to the deepest, the most acute remorse. I immediately quitted Germany for the purpose of travelling, with the intent, if possible, of expiating my guilt; and this self-imposed task I shall continue while I live. To reward the good, to punish the evil-doer, relieve those who suffer, penetrate into every hideous corner where vice holds her court, for the purpose of rescuing some unfortunate creatures from the destruction into which they have fallen: such is the employment I have marked out for myself."

"It is a noble and holy task—one worthy of being performed by you."

"If I speak of this sacred vow," said Rodolph, disdainfully, "it is not to draw down your approbation or praise. But hearken to what remains to be told: I have lately arrived in France, and I wished not to let my great purpose of continual expiatory acts stand still during my sojourn in this country. While I sought then to succour those of good reputation, who

were in unmerited distress, I was also desirous of knowing that class of miserable beings who are beaten down, trampled under feet, and brutalised by want and wretchedness, well knowing that timely help, a few kind and encouraging words, may frequently have power to save a lost creature from the abyss into which he is falling. In order to be an eye-witness of the circumstances under which my work of expiation would be useful, I assumed the dress and appearance of those I wished to mix with. It was during one of these exploring adventures that I first encountered ——" Then, as though shuddering at the idea of so terrible a disclosure, Rodolph, after a momentary hesitation, added, "No, no! I have not courage to finish the dreadful story!"

"For the love of heaven, tell me what horror have you now to unfold?"

"You will hear it but too soon! But," added he with sarcastic bitterness, "you seem to take so lively an interest in past events, that I cannot refrain from relating to you a few events which preceded my return to France. After passing some time in my travels, I returned to Germany, filled with a spirit of obedience to my father, by whose desire I espoused a princess of Prussia. During my absence you had been banished from

the Grand Duchy. Subsequently, learning your marriage with Count Macgregor, I again entreated you to allow me to have my child. To this earnest request no answer was returned; nor could my strictest inquiries ever discover whither you had sent the unfortunate infant, for whom my father had made a handsome provision. About ten years ago I received a letter from you, stating that our child was dead. Would to God your information had been correct, and that she had indeed rendered up her innocent life at that tender age! I should then have been spared the deep, incurable anguish which must for ever embitter my life!"

"I cease now to wonder," said Sarah, in a feeble voice, "at the disgust and aversion with which I seem to have inspired you; and I feel, too surely, that I shall not survive this last blow. You are right: pride and ambition have been my ruin. Ignorant of the just causes you had to hate and despise me, my former hopes returned with greater force than ever. Our mutual widowhood inspired me with a still stronger belief in the prediction which promised me a crown; and when, by a singular chance, I again found my daughter, it appeared to me as though the hand of Providence had bestowed this unhoped-for good fortune on me to further my so long-cherished plans. Yes, I will confess that I went so far as to persuade myself that, spite of the aversion you entertained for me, you would bestow on me your name, and that, out of regard for your child, you would accept me as your wife, if but to elevate her to the rank to which she is entitled."

"Then let your execrable ambition be satisfied, and punished as it deserves; for, spite of the abhorrence I now hold you in, I would, out of love for my child, or, rather, from a deep pity for its early sorrows—I would, although firmly determined always to live apart from you, by a marriage which should have legitimised my daughter, have rendered her future lot as brilliant and exalted as her past life has been wretched."

"I had not, then, deceived myself? Oh, misery!—to think it is now too late!"

"Oh, I am well aware it is not your child you regret, but the loss of that rank you have so eagerly and obstinately striven to obtain. May your unfeeling and disgraceful regrets pursue you to your grave!"

"Then they will not long torment me; for I feel I shall not long survive this final ending of all my ambitious schemes."

"But ere your existence closes, it is but fair and just you should be made aware what sort of life your poor deserted child's has been. Do you recollect the night on which you and your brother followed me into a den in the Cité?"

"Perfectly! But why this question? It freezes me with horror: your looks fill me with dread!"

"As you approached this low haunt of vice, you saw—did you not?—standing at the corners of the low streets with which that neighbourhood abounds, groups of poor, unfortunate, guilty creatures, who—who—— But I cannot finish the dreadful tale!" cried Rodolph, concealing his face with his hands. "I dare not proceed; my own words affright me!"

"As they do me! What more have I to learn?"

"You saw them, I ask—did you not?" resumed Rodolph, making a

powerful struggle to overcome his emotion. "You observed these base and degraded creatures, the shame and disgrace of their own sex? But did you remark among them a young girl of about sixteen years of age, lovely as an angel—a poor child, who, amid the infamy in which she had lived during the last few weeks, still retained a look so pure, so innocent, and good, that even the ruffians by whom she was surrounded called her Fleur-de-Marie? Did you observe this—this fair, this interesting being? Answer—answer—tender, exemplary mother!"

"No!" answered Sarah, almost mechanically; "I did not observe the young person you speak of." But the teeth rattled in Sarah's head as she spoke, and her whole frame seemed oppressed with a vague though fearful dread of coming evil.

"Indeed!" cried Rodolph, with a sardonic smile, "indeed! I am surprised at that! Well, *I did* remark, and upon the following occasion. Listen attentively to what I am about to relate! During one of the exploring excursions I before spoke of, I found myself in the Cité, not far from the den to which you followed me. A man was just going to beat one of the unfortunate creatures who herd together there; I interposed, and saved her from his brutal rage. Now then, careful, kind, and anxious mother, tell me, if you can, whom it was I saved! Can you not guess? Speak! Say your heart whispers to you who was the miserable being I found in this sink of wickedness and pollution! You know, do you not, without my assistance?"

"No, no—I cannot say! I beseech you to go—and leave me to my thoughts!"

"Then I will tell you who the wretched, trembling creature I thus saved from brutal violence was. Her name was Fleur-de-Marie!"

"Merciful powers!"

"And is it possible that you—most irreproachable of mothers—that you cannot divine who Fleur-de-Marie was?"

"Be merciful, and kill me; but torture me not thus!"

"She was your daughter—known as the Goualeuse!" cried Rodolph, with almost frantic violence. "Yes, the helpless girl I rescued from the hands of a felon was my own, my lost child!—the offspring of Rodolph of Gerolstein! Oh, there was in this meeting with a daughter I unconsciously saved a visible interposition of the hand of Providence! It brought a blessing to the man who had striven so earnestly to succour his fellow-men, and it conveyed a well-merited chastisement for the impious wretch who had dared to aim at his father's life!"

"Alas!" murmured Sarah, falling back in her arm-chair, and concealing her face with her hands, "my destiny is accomplished! I die, carrying with me out of the world the curse both of God and man!"

"And when," continued Rodolph, with much difficulty restraining his resentment, and vainly striving to repress the sobs which from time to time interrupted his voice, "when I had released her from the ill-usage with which she was menaced, struck with the indescribable sweetness of her voice and manner, as well as by the angelic expression of her lovely countenance, I found it impossible to abandon the interest she excited in me. I led her on to tell me the history of her life, made up of neglect, grief, and misery. With what simple eloquence did she express the

yearnings of a heart that had never expanded into virtue beneath a mother's fostering care after a life of innocence, and how touchingly did she dwell on the destitution which had led her where she was! Ah, madame, to have brought down your pride and haughtiness, you should have listened as I did while your daughter described her early years as passed in shivering beggary, soliciting charity in the streets all day, and at night, when the cold winter's wind pierced through the few rags she wore, creeping to her bed of straw strewn in the corner of a wretched garret; and when the horrible old hag who tortured her had exhausted every other means of inflicting pain on her, what do you think she did, madam?—why, wrenched out her teeth! And all this starving and desolation was experienced by your own child, while you were revelling in every sort of luxury, and indulging in ambitious dreams of sharing a crown!"

"Oh, that I could die, and so escape the direful agony I suffer!"

"Nay, you have more to hear! Escaping from the hands of the Chouette, wandering about, penniless and starving, at the tender age of only ten years she was taken up as a vagabond, and as such thrown into prison. And yet, madam, that period was the happiest your poor deserted child had ever known. And each night, though surrounded by her prison-walls, she gratefully thanked God that she no longer suffered from hunger, thirst, or blows. It was in a prison she passed those years so precious to the well-being of a young female, those years over which a good and affectionate mother so carefully and anxiously watches. As her sixteenth year commenced, your daughter, instead of being surrounded by the tender solicitude of loving relatives, and enriched with all the gifts of education, had seen and known nothing more edifying or elevated than the brutal indifference of her gaolers. Yet this naturally pure-minded, beautiful, and ingenuous creature was at that dangerous moment sent forth from her safe asylum—a gaol—and left to wander unaided and unprotected in a world of which she knew so little! Unfortunate, deserted, friendless child!" continued Rodolph, giving free vent to the swelling sobs which had continually impeded his voice, "yours was, indeed, a bitter lot—thrown thus young and helpless amid the mire and pollution of a great city! Ah, madam!" cried he, addressing Sarah, "however cold, hard, and selfish your heart may be, you could not have refrained from weeping at the recital of your poor, neglected child's misery and privations! Poor, hapless girl! sullied, but not corrupted; chaste in heart even amid the degradation into which she had fallen; for each word she uttered breathed the most unfeigned horror and disgust at the mode of life to which she was so fatally condemned. Oh, could you but have known what delicate thoughts, what noble, high-minded inspirations were betrayed in her every word and action! How good, how feeling, how innately charitable was her nature! for it was to relieve a degree of misery even greater than her own that she exhausted the small sum of money she had received on quitting her prison, and which, while it lasted, formed her only defence from the abyss of infamy into which she was afterwards plunged; for there came a time,—a hideous time, when, without employment, food, or shelter, some horrible women found her almost perishing from weakness and want of support. Under

pretence of aiding her, they took her to their guilty haunts, administered intoxicating drugs, and — and ——"

Rodolph could proceed no further. He uttered a distracting cry, and exclaimed, "And this was my child!"

"May Heaven's punishment be on me for what I have done!" said Sarah, hiding her face as though she feared to meet the light of day.

"Aye!" exclaimed Rodolph. "And it will assuredly cling to you all your life, and haunt even your dying pillow; for it is your neglect and abandonment of all a mother's most sacred duties which have led to all these horrors. Accursed may you ever be for your double wickedness towards your unoffending child! For even after I had succeeded in removing her from the guilt and pollution by which she was surrounded, and had placed her in a safe and peaceful asylum, you set your vile accomplices on to tear her thence! My curse be for ever on you! for it was owing to your

causing her to be forcibly carried off, which threw her back into the power of Jacques Ferrand."

As Rodolph pronounced this name he suddenly stopped and shuddered. The features of the prince assumed an expression of concentrated rage and hatred impossible to describe; mute and motionless he stood, as though crushed to the earth by the reflection that the murderer of his child was still in existence.

Spite of the increasing weakness of Sarah and the agitation caused by this interview with Rodolph, she was so much struck with his threatening aspect, that she faintly exclaimed,—

"In mercy say what fresh idea has taken possession of your mind?"

"No, no!" responded Rodolph, as though speaking to himself; "till now I thought to spare this monster, believing a life of enforced charity would be to him one of never-ending torment. Now I must revenge my infant child, delivered up by him to want and misery! I have to wash out the stain of my daughter's infamy, caused by his diabolical villany and cupidity; and his blood alone will serve to wipe out that foul wrong! Yes, he dies—and by my hand!" And, with these words, the prince sprang forwards to the door.

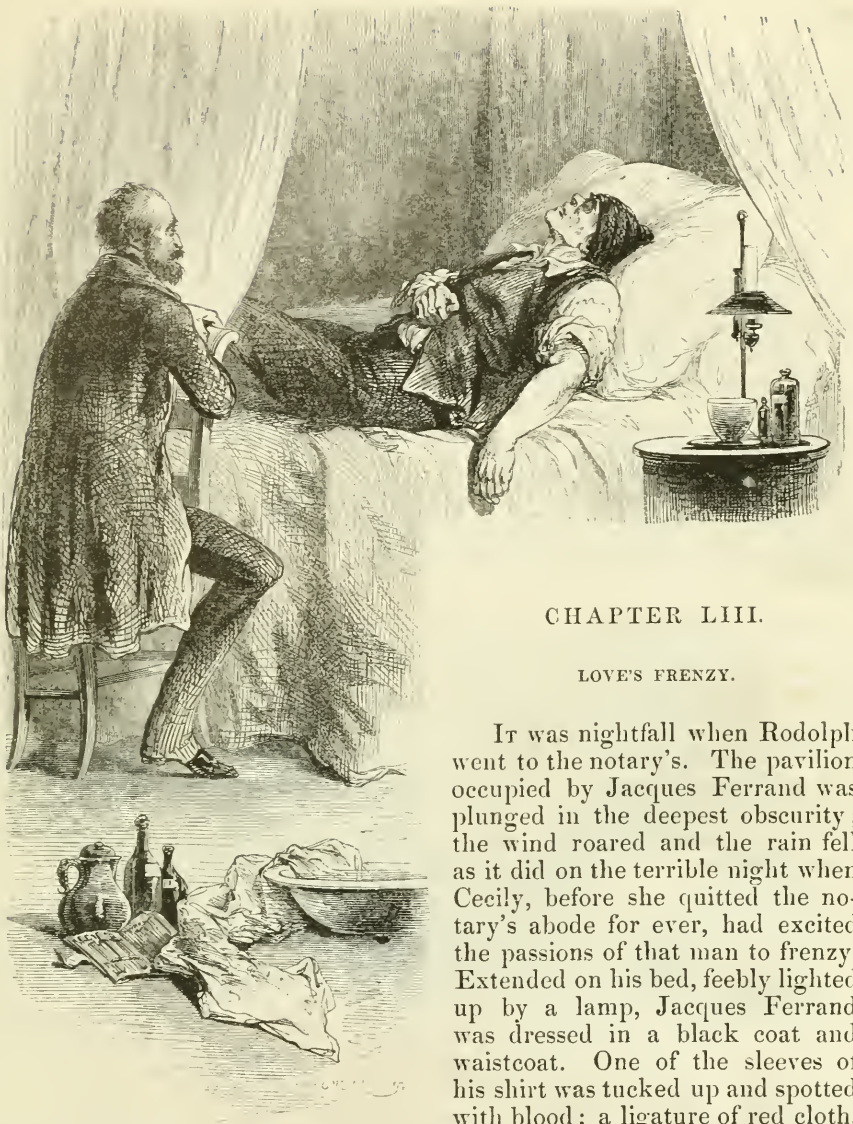
"Whither are you going?" cried Sarah, extending her supplicating hands towards Rodolph. "Oh! leave me not to die alone——"

"Alone?—oh, no! fear not to die alone! The spectre of the innocent child, doomed by you to an early grave, will bear you company."

Exhausted and alarmed, Sarah uttered a scream, as though she really beheld the phantom of her child, exclaiming, "Forgive me! I am dying!"

"Die then, accursed woman!" shouted Rodolph, wild with fury. "Now I must have the life of your accomplice, for it was you who delivered your child to this monster!"

And hastening from the apartment, Rodolph ordered himself to be rapidly driven to the residence of Jacques Ferrand.



CHAPTER LIII.

LOVE'S FRENZY.

It was nightfall when Rodolph went to the notary's. The pavilion occupied by Jacques Ferrand was plunged in the deepest obscurity; the wind roared and the rain fell as it did on the terrible night when Cecily, before she quitted the notary's abode for ever, had excited the passions of that man to frenzy. Extended on his bed, feebly lighted up by a lamp, Jacques Ferrand was dressed in a black coat and waistcoat. One of the sleeves of his shirt was tucked up and spotted with blood; a ligature of red cloth, which was to be seen on his nervous arm, announced that he had been bled by Polidori, who, standing near his bed, leaned one hand on the couch, and seemed to watch his accomplice's features with uneasiness. Nothing could be more frightfully hideous than was Jacques Ferrand, whilst plunged in that somnolent torpor which usually succeeds violent crises. Of an ashy paleness, his face was bedewed with a cold sweat, and his closed eyelids were so swollen, so injected with blood, that they appeared like two red balls in the centre of his cadaverous countenance.

"Another such an attack and he is a dead man!" exclaimed Polidori, in a low voice. "All the writers on this subject have agreed that all who

are attacked by this strange and frightful malady usually sink under it on the seventh day, and it is now six days since that infernal Creole kindled the inextinguishable flame which is consuming this man." After some minutes of further meditation, Polidori left the bedside and walked slowly up and down the chamber.

The tempest was still raging without, and fell with such fury on this dilapidated house as to shake it to its centre. Despite his audacity and wickedness, Polidori was superstitious, and dark forebodings came over him; he felt an undefinable uneasiness. In order to dissipate his gloomy thoughts, he again examined Ferrand's features.

"Now," he said, leaning over him, "his eyelids are injected. It would seem as though his blood flowed thither and stagnated. No doubt his sight will now present, as his hearing did just now, some remarkable appearance! What agonies now they endure!—how they vary! Oh!" he added, with a bitter smile, "when nature determines on being cruel and playing the part of a tormentor, she defies all the efforts of man; and thus in this illness, caused by an erotic frenzy, she submits every sense to unheard-of, superhuman tortures."

The storm still howled without, and Polidori, throwing himself into an arm-chair, exclaimed, "What a night!—what a night! Nothing could be worse for Jacques's present state. Yes," he continued, "the prince is pitiless, and it would have been a thousand times better for Ferrand to have allowed his head to fall upon a scaffold; better fire, the wheel, molten lead, which burns and eats into the flesh, than the miserable punishment he endures! As I see him suffer I begin to feel affright for my own fate! What will become of me? What is in reserve for me as the accomplice of Jacques? To be his gaoler will not suffice for the prince's vengeance. Perhaps a perpetual imprisonment in the prisons of Germany awaits me! But that is better than death! Yet I know that the prince's

word is sacred! But I, who have so often violated all laws human and divine, dare I invoke a sworn promise? Inasmuch as it was to my interest that Jacques should not escape, so will it be equally my interest to prolong his days. But his symptoms grow worse and worse: nothing but a miracle can save him. What is to be done?—what is to be done?"

At this moment a crash without, occasioned by the fall of a stack of chimneys, roused Jacques Ferrand, and he turned on his bed.

Polidori became more and more under the influence of the vague terror which had seized on him. "It is folly to believe in presentiments," he said, in a troubled voice; "but the night seems to me very appalling!"

A heavy groan from the notary attracted Polidori's attention. "He is awaking from his torpor," he said, approaching his bed very quietly; "perhaps another crisis may ensue!"

"Polidori!" muttered Jacques Ferrand, still extended on the bed, and with his eyes closed,—"Polidori, what noise was that?"

"A chimney that fell," replied Polidori, in a low voice, fearing to strike too loudly on the hearing of his accomplice. "A fearful tempest shakes the house to its foundation; it is a horrible night!"

The notary did not hear, and replied, turning away his head, "Polidori, you are not there then?"

"Yes, yes—I am here," said Polidori, in a louder voice; "but I answered gently for fear of giving you pain."

"No; I hear you now without any pain such as I had just now, for then it seemed as if the least noise burst like thunder on my brain. And yet in the midst of it all—of these horrible sufferings—I distinguish the thrilling voice of Cecily, who was calling to me——"

"Still that infernal woman! But drive away these thoughts—they will kill you."

"These thoughts are life to me, and, like my life, they resist all tortures."

"Madman that you are, it is these thoughts that cause your tortures! Your illness is your sensual frenzy, which has attained its utmost height. Once again, drive from your brain these thoughts, or you will die."

"Drive away these thoughts!" cried Ferrand; "oh! never, never! When my pains give me one moment's repose, Cecily—the demon whom I cherish and curse, rises before my eyes!"

"What incredible fury! It frightens me!"

"There—now!" said the notary, with a harsh voice, and his eyes fixed on a dark corner of the room. "I see now the outline of an obscure and white form: there—there!" and he extended his hairy and bony finger in the direction of his sight. "There—there she is!"

"Jacques, this is death to you!"

"Yes, I see her!" continued Ferrand, with his teeth clenched, and not replying to Polidori. "There she is!—and how beautiful! How her black hair floats gracefully down her shoulders, and her small white teeth shining between her half-opened lips—her lips so red and humid! What pearls! And how her black eyes sparkle and die! Cecily!" he added, with inexpressible excitement, "I adore you!"

"Jacques, do not excite yourself with such visions!"

"It is not a vision."

"Mind, mind! Just now, you know, you imagined you heard this woman's love-songs, and your hearing was suddenly smitten with horrible agony. Mind, I say!"

"Leave me—leave me! What is the use of hearing but to hear, of seeing but to see?"

"But the tortures which follow—miserable wretch!"

"I will brave them all for a deceit, as I have braved death for a reality; and to me this burning image is reality. Ah, Cecily, you are beautiful! Yet why torture me thus? Would you kill me? Ah! exe-

crable fury, cease—cease—or I will strangle thee!" cried the notary in delirium.

"You kill yourself, unhappy man!" exclaimed Polidori, shaking the notary violently, in order to rouse him from his excitement. In vain; Jacques continued,—

"Oh! beloved queen—demon of delight—never did I see——" The notary could not finish; he uttered a sudden cry of pain and threw himself back.

"What is it?" inquired Polidori, with astonishment.

"Put out that candle—it shines too brightly. I cannot endure it—it blinds me!"

"What!" said Polidori, more and more surprised. "There is but one lamp covered with its shade, and that shines very feebly."

"I tell you, the light increases here. Now, again—again! Oh, it is too much—it is intolerable!" added Jacques Ferrand, closing his eyes with an expression of increasing suffering.

"You are mad—the room is scarcely lighted. I tell you, open your eyes and you will see."

"Open my eyes! Why, I shall be blinded by torrents of burning light, with which this room is filled. Here!—there!—on all sides, there are rays of fire—millions of dazzling scintillations!" cried the notary, sitting up. And then again shrieking, he lifted both his hands to his eyes: "But I am blind; this burning fire is through my closed lids—it burns—devours me! Ah, now my hands shield me a little! But put out the light, for it throws an infernal flame!"

"It is beyond doubt now!" said Polidori. "His sight is struck with the same excess of sensitiveness as his hearing was; he is a dead man! To bleed him in this state would at once destroy him."

A fresh cry ensued, sharp and terrible, from Jacques Ferrand, which resounded in the chamber.

"Villain! put out that lamp! Its glaring beams penetrate through my hands, which they make transparent. I see the blood circulate in the net of my veins, and I try in vain to close my eyelids, for the burning lava will flow in. Oh, what torture! There are gushes as dazzling as if some one were thrusting a red-hot iron into my eyes. Help! help!" he shrieked, twisting himself on his bed, a prey to the horrible convulsions of his extreme agony.

Polidori, alarmed at the excess of this fresh fit, suddenly extinguished the lamp, and they were both in perfect darkness. At this moment the noise of a carriage was heard at the door in the street. When the chamber had been rendered entirely dark in which Polidori and Ferrand were, the latter was somewhat relieved from his extreme pains.

"Where are you going?" said Polidori suddenly, when he heard Jacques Ferrand rise, for the deepest obscurity reigned in the apartment.

"I am going to find Cecily!"

"You shall not go; the sight of that room would kill you!"

"Cecily awaits me up there!"

"You shall not go—I will prevent you!" said Polidori, seizing the notary by the arm.

Jacques Ferrand having reached the extremity of exhaustion, was unable to contend with Polidori, who grasped him with a powerful clutch. "What! would you prevent me from seeking Cecily?"

"Yes; and besides, there is a lamp in the next room, and you know what an effect light so recently produced on your sight!"

"Cecily is up above; she is waiting for me, and I would cross a red-hot furnace to rejoin her. Let me go! She called me her old tiger; mind you, then, for my claws are sharp!"

"You shall not go! I will sooner tie you down to your bed like a furious madman!"

"Listen, Polidori! I am not mad—I am perfectly in my senses. I know that Cecily is not really up there; but to me the phantoms of my imagination are equal to realities."

"Silence!" cried Polidori suddenly, and listening. "I just now thought I heard a carriage stop at the door—and I was not mistaken! Now I hear a sound of voices in the courtyard."

"You want to deceive me," said Jacques; "but I am not so easily deceived!"

"But, unhappy man, listen—listen! Don't you hear?"

"Let me go! Cecily is up-stairs; she calls me. Do not make me furious! And now I say to you, mind—beware!"

"You shall not go out!"

"Take care!"

"You shall not go out. It is for my interest that you should remain."

"You would hinder me from seeking Cecily, and it is my interest that you should die. There—there!" said the notary, in a gloomy tone.

Polidori uttered a cry. "Wretch! you have stabbed me in the arm. But your hand was weak—the wound is slight—and you shall not escape me."

"Your wound is mortal, for it was given by the poisoned stiletto of Cecily, which I always carried about me. Await the effects of its poison—— Ah! you release me!—then now you are about to die! I was not to be hindered from going up above to find Cecily!" added Jacques, endeavouring to grope his way in darkness to the door.

"Oh!" murmured Polidori; "my arm becomes benumbed—a death-like coldness seizes on me—my knees tremble under me—my blood freezes in my veins—my head whirls round. Help! help!—I die!" And he fainted.

The crash of glass-doors, opened with so much violence that several panes of glass were broken to atoms, the resounding voice of Rodolph, and the noise of hastily approaching steps, seemed to reply to Polidori's cry of anguish.

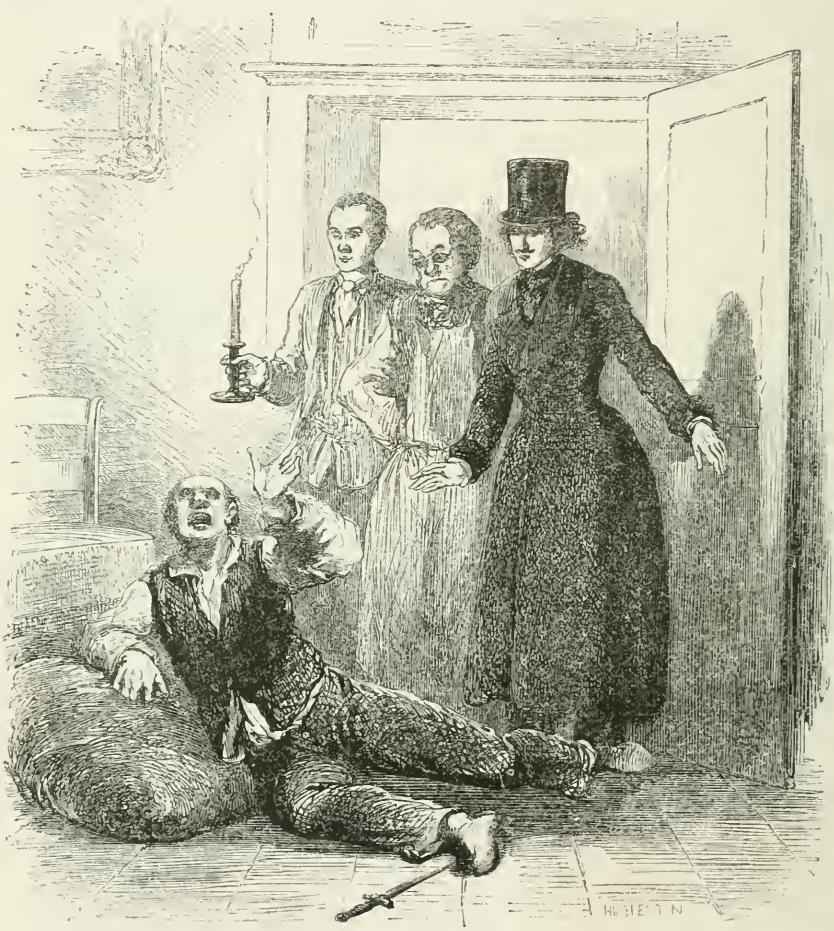
Jacques Ferrand having at length discovered the lock of the door, opened it suddenly, with his dangerous stiletto in his hand. At the same instant, as menacing and formidable as the genius of vengeance, the prince entered the apartment from the other side.

"Monster!" he exclaimed, advancing towards Jacques Ferrand, "it was my daughter whom you have killed! You are going——" The prince could not conclude, but recoiled in amazement.

It would seem as if his words had been a thunderbolt to Ferrand, for casting away his dagger, and raising both his hands to his eyes, the unhappy wretch fell with his face to the ground, uttering a cry that was scarcely human. To complete the phenomenon which we have attempted to describe, and the action which profound obscurity had suspended, when Jacques Ferrand entered into the apartment so brilliantly lighted up, he was struck with an overwhelming vertigo, just as though he had been suddenly cast into the midst of a torrent of light as blazing as the disk of the sun. It was a fearful spectacle to see the agony of this man, who was twisting in convulsions, tearing the floor with his nails, as if he would have dug himself a hole to escape from the atrocious tortures occasioned by this powerful light. Rodolph, one of his servants, and the porter of the house, who had been compelled to guide the prince hither, were struck with horror.

In spite of his just hatred, Rodolph felt a pity for the unheard-of sufferings of Jacques Ferrand, and desired that he should be laid on the sofa. This was not effected without difficulty, for, from fear of being subjected to the direst influence of the lamp, the notary struggled violently; and when his face was covered with the full glare of the light, he uttered another shriek—a shriek which chilled Rodolph with terror. After fresh and long torture, the phenomenon ceased by its very violence. Having reached the last bounds of suffering without death following, the visual torment ceased; but, according to the regular course of the malady, a delirious excitement followed the crisis. Jacques Ferrand became suddenly as stiffened in frame as an epileptic; his eyelids, until then obstinately closed, suddenly opened, and, instead of avoiding the light, his eyes fixed themselves on it immovably, the pupils, in a state of

extraordinary dilatation and fixedness, seeming phosphorescent and internally lighted up. He appeared plunged in a kind of ecstatic contemplation; his body and limbs remained at first in a state of complete immobility, his features being agitated by nervous twitches and spasms. His hideous countenance, thus contracted and twisted, had no longer any human appearance; and it appeared as if the appetites of the animal, by stifling the intelligence of the man, impressed on the features of this wretch a character absolutely bestial. Having attained the mortal point



of his madness, he remembered in his delirium the words of Cecily, who had called him her tiger: gradually his reason forsook him, and he imagined he was a tiger. His half-uttered, breathless words displayed the disorder of his brain, and the singular aberration that had seized on him. Gradually his limbs, until then stiff and motionless, extended: he

fell from the sofa, and tried to rise and walk, but his strength failed him; and he was compelled now to crawl like a reptile, and now to drag himself along on his hands and knees—going, coming—this way and that way—as his visions impelled or obtained possession of him. Crouched in one of the corners of the room, like a tiger in his den, his hoarse and furious cries, his grinding of teeth, the convulsive twistings of the muscles of his face and brows, and his ardent gaze, gave him a wild and frightful resemblance to this ferocious brute.

"Tiger—tiger—tiger—that I am!" he said, in a harsh voice, and gathering himself into a heap; "yes, tiger! What blood! In my cavern what rent carcasses—La Goualeuse—the brother of this widow—a small child, Louise's baby—these are the carcasses, and my tigress Cecily will have her share." Then looking at his torn fingers, the nails of which had grown immensely during his illness, he added, in broken language, "Oh, my sharp nails—sharp and keen! An old tiger I am, but agile, strong, and bold; no one dares dispute my tigress Cecily with me. Ah! she calls—she calls!" he said, advancing his hideous visage and listening. After a moment's silence he huddled himself against the wall again and continued: "No! I thought I had heard her; but she is not there. Yet I see her; oh yes, always—always! Ah! there she is! She calls me; she roars—roars down there! I'm here—I'm here!" and Ferrand dragged himself towards the centre of the room on his hands and knees. Although his strength was exhausted, he made a convulsive leap from time to time, then paused, and listened attentively. "Where is she? I approach—she goes away. Cecily, here is your old tiger!" he cried, as, with a last effort, he arose and balanced himself on his knees. Suddenly falling back with affright, his body bending on his heels, his hair on end, his look haggard, his mouth twisted with terror, his two hands extended, he seemed to struggle with desperation with some invisible object, uttering incoherent words, and exclaiming, in broken tones, "What a bite! Help!—my hands are powerless; I cannot drive away these sharp teeth! No, no! Oh! not such eyes! Help!—a serpent—a black snake—with its flat head and fiery eyes. How it looks at me! It is the fiend! Ah! he knows me—Jacques Ferrand—at church—the pious man—always at church! Go, go—cross yourself!" and the notary, raising himself a little, and leaning with one hand on the floor, endeavoured to cross himself with the other. His livid brow was bathed in cold sweat, his eyes began to lose their transparency and become dim, all the symptoms of approaching death manifested themselves.

Rodolph and the other witnesses of the scene remained as motionless and mute as if they had been under the effect of a frightful dream.

"Oh!" continued Jacques Ferrand, still half stretched on the floor, and supporting himself by one hand, "the demon vanishes. I am going to church—I am a holy man—I pray! What! no one will know it?—do you think so? No, no, tempter—be quite sure! Well, let them come—these women—all! Yes, all—if no one finds it out! But the secret!" he continued, in a tone of exhaustion, "the secret! Ah! here they are! Three! What says this one?—I am Louise Morel. Oh! yes—Louise Morel; I know it! I am only one of the people! You think me handsome? Here—take her! What does she bring me?—

her head cut off by the executioner! It looks at me, that head of death! It speaks! The livid lips move and say, '*Come — come — come!*' I will not — I will not! Demon, leave me! Go — go — go! And this other woman? — ah! beautiful — beautiful! — Jacques, I am the Duchesse de Lucenay. See my angelic figure — my smile — my bold glance! Come, come! Yes, I come. But wait! And who is this one who turns away her face? Oh! Cecily — Cecily! Yes, Jacques, 'tis Cecily! You see the three Graces — Louise, the Duchess, and myself. Choose! Beauty of the people — patrician beauty — the savage beauty of the tropics — and hell with us! Come — come! Hell with you? Yes!" shrieked Jacques Ferrand, again rising on his knees, and extending his arms to seize these phantoms.

This last effort was followed by a mortal throe, and he fell back again stiff and lifeless: his eyes starting from their orbits, whilst fierce convulsions were visible on his features, unnaturally distorted; a bloody foam on his lips; his voice hoarse and strangling, like that of a person in hydrophobia, for, in its last paroxysm, this fearful malady shews the same symptoms as madness. The breath of this monster was extinguished in the midst of a final and horrible vision, for he stammered forth these words, "Black night! — black spectres! — skeletons of brass, red-hot with fire! Unfold me! Their burning fingers make my flesh smoke; my marrow is scorched! Fleshless, horrid spectre! No — no! Cecily — fire — flame — agony — Cecily!"

These were Jacques Ferrand's last words, and Rodolph left the place overcome with horror.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE HOSPITAL.

It will be remembered that Fleur-de-Marie, saved by La Louve, had been conveyed not far from the Ile du Ravageur to the country-house of Dr. Griffon, one of the surgeons of the hospital, to which we shall now introduce the reader. This learned doctor, who had obtained from high

influence his position in the hospital, considered the wards as a kind of school of experiments where he tried on the poor the remedies and applications which he afterwards used with his rich clients.

These terrible experiments were, indeed, a human sacrifice made

on the altar of science; but Dr. Griffon did not think of that. In the eyes of this *prince of science*, as they say in our days, the hospital patients were only a matter of study and experiment; and as, after all, there resulted from his essays occasionally a useful fact or a discovery acquired by science, the doctor shewed himself as ingenuously satisfied and triumphant as a general after a victory which has been costly in soldiers.

Nothing could be more melancholy than the sombre appearance of the vast ward of the hospital, into which we now introduce the reader. The length of its high, dark walls, pierced here and there with grated windows like those of a prison, was filled with two rows of beds parallel, and faintly lighted by the sepulchral glare of a lamp hanging from the ceiling. The atmosphere is so nauseous, so heavy, that the fresh patients frequently did not become accustomed to it without danger, and this increase of suffering is a sort of *tax* which every new comer invariably pays for his miserable sojourn in the hospital. In one of the beds was the corpse of a patient who had just died. Amongst the females who did not sleep, and who had been present whilst the priest performed the last rites with the dying woman, were three persons whose names have been already mentioned in this history: Mademoiselle de Fermont, the daughter of the unfortunate widow ruined by the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand; La Lorraine, the poor laundress, to whom Fleur-de-Marie had formerly given the small sum of money she had left; and Jeanne Duport, the sister of Pique-Vinaigre. La Lorraine was a woman about twenty, with mild and regular features, but extremely pale and thin; she was consumptive to the last degree, and there was no hope of saving her. She was aware of her condition, and was slowly dying.

La Lorraine.

"There is another gone!" said La Lorraine, in a faint voice, and speaking to herself. "She will suffer no more; she is very happy!"

"She is very happy if she has no children!" added Jeanne.

"Aren't you asleep, neighbour?" asked La Lorraine. "How are you after your first night here? Last night, when you came in, they made you go to-bed directly, and I dared not speak to you because I heard you sob so."

"Yes, I cried a good deal; but I went to sleep at last, and only awoke when the noise of the doors roused me; and when the priest and the sisters came in and knelt down; I saw it was some woman who was dying, and I said a *Pater* and *Ave* for her."

"And so did I; and as I am ill with the same complaint as she had, I could not help crying out, 'There is one who suffers no more; she is very happy!'"

"Yes, as I said, if she has no children."

"Then you have children?"

"Three!" said Pique-Vinaigre's sister with a sigh. "And you?"

"I had a little girl, but I did not keep her long. The poor babe was injured before she was born—and I was so wretched during my pregnancy! I am a washerwoman in the boats, and worked as long as I could. But every thing has an end, and when my strength failed me, bread failed me also. They turned me out of my lodging; and I do not know what would have become of me, if a poor woman had not taken me into a cellar, where she was hiding from her husband, who had sworn he would kill her. There I was brought to-bed on the straw; but, thanks to goodness, the good woman knew a young girl as good and charitable as an angel from heaven. This young girl had a little money, and took me from the cellar and put me in a furnished room, where she paid a month in advance, and gave me, besides, a wicker cradle for my baby and forty francs, with a little linen beside. Thanks to her, I was enabled to resume my work!"

"Kind girl! Well, and I, also, met by chance with such another—a young, hard-working sempstress. I was going to see my poor brother, who is a prisoner," said Jeanne, after a moment's hesitation, "and met this work-girl in the prison; and when she heard me tell my brother that I was not happy, she came to me and offered me all in her power, poor girl! I accepted her offer, and she gave me her address; and two days afterwards, dear little Mademoiselle Rigolette—she is called Rigolette—sent me an order."

"Rigolette!" exclaimed Lorraine; "how strange! The young girl who was so generous to me often mentioned the name of Mademoiselle Rigolette in my hearing; they were great friends."

"Well, then," said Jeanne, smiling sadly, "since we are neighbours in bed, we should be friends like our two benefactresses."

"With all my heart! My name is Annette Gerbier, called La Lorraine, a washerwoman."

"And I am Jeanne Duport, a fringe-maker. Oh, it is so fortunate to find in this melancholy place some one not quite a stranger to you, especially when you come for the first time, and are very full of trouble. But don't let us talk of that! Tell me, Lorraine, what was the name of the young girl who was so kind to you?"

"She was called Goualeuse, and was exceedingly handsome, with light brown hair and blue eyes, so soft—oh! so soft! Unfortunately, in spite of her assistance, my poor babe died at two months old. It was so puny, it could hardly breathe!" and La Lorraine wiped a tear from her eye.

"And your husband?"

"I am not married. I washed by the day at a rich tradesman's in my country, and had always been prudent; but the master's son whispered his tales in my ear, and then —— When I found in what a state I was, I dared not remain any longer in the country, and M. Jules gave me fifty

francs to take me to Paris, assuring me that he would send me twenty francs every month for my lying-in; but since I left I have not had one sous, not even a message. I wrote to him once, but he sent me no answer;

and I was afraid to write again, as I saw he did not wish to hear any more of me."

"At least he ought not to have forgotten you, if it was only for the sake of the child!"

"That was the reason; he was angry with me for being in the family way, because it embarrassed him. I regret my child for myself, but not on its own account, poor little darling! It must have been miserable, and have been an orphan very early, for I have not long to live."

"Oh! you ought not to have such ideas at your age. Have you been long ill?"

"Nearly three months. Why, when I had to work for myself and my child, I began too soon. The winter was very cold; I was attacked with a cold on my chest. I lost my child at this time, too; and nursing her, I neglected myself, and then my sorrow: so that I fell into a consumption —decided—like the actress who has just died."

"There's always hope at your age!"

"The actress was only two years older than I am."

"What, was she an actress who is just dead?"

"Yes. And see what fate is! She had been as beautiful as daylight, and had money, carriages, diamonds; but, unfortunately, the small-pox disfigured her, and then came want and misery, and, at last, death in an hospital. No one ever came to see her; and yet, four or five days ago, she told me, she had written to a gentleman whom she had formerly known in her gay days, and who had been much in love with her. She wrote to him to beg him to claim her dead body, because she was wretched at the idea of thinking she would be dissected—cut in pieces."

"And did the gentleman come?"

"No. Every moment she was asking for him and perpetually saying, 'Oh! he'll come!—oh! he'll be sure to come!' And yet she died without any one coming, and what she so much dreaded will befall her poor frame. After having been rich and happy, to die so is very terrible! We, at least, only change our miseries!"

"I wish," said Lorraine, after a moment's hesitation, "I wish you would render me a service!"

"What is it?"

"If I die, as is probable, before you go from here, will you claim my body? I have the same dread as the actress, and have laid aside the small sum of money necessary to bury me."

"Oh! do not have such ideas!"

"Still promise me all the same!"

"But let us hope the case will not happen!"

"Yes; but if it does happen—thanks to you! I shall not have the same misery as the actress."

"Poor woman! After having been rich to come to such an end!"

"The actress is not the only one in this room who has been rich."

"Who else?"

"A young girl of about fifteen or so, brought here yesterday evening. She was so weak that they were obliged to support her. The sister said that the young lady and her mother were very reputable persons, who had been ruined."

"And is her mother here too?"

"No, the mother was too ill to be moved. The poor girl would not leave, so they took advantage of her fainting to convey her. The proprietor of a wretched lodging-house, for fear they should die in his rooms, made the report at the police-station. She is there—in the bed opposite you."

"And she is fifteen?—the age of my eldest girl!" And Jeanne Duport wept bitterly.

"Pardon me," said La Lorraine, "if I have given you pain unconsciously in speaking of your children! Are they, too, ill?"

"Alas! I do not know. What will become of them if I remain here for a week?"

"And your husband?"

"As we are friends together, Lorraine, I will tell you my troubles, as you have told me yours, and that will comfort me. My husband was an excellent workman, but became dissipated, and forsook me and my children, after having sold every thing we possessed. I went to work; some good souls aided me, and I began to get easy again, and was bringing up my little family as well as I could, when my husband returned with a vile creature his mistress, and again stripped me of every thing; and so I had to begin all over again."

"Poor Jeanne! you could not help it."

"I ought to have separated myself from him in law—but, as my brother says, the law is too dear! I went to see my brother one day, and he gave me three francs, which he had collected amongst the prisoners on telling his tales. So I took courage, believing my husband would not return for a very long time, as he had taken all he could from us. But I was mistaken," added the poor creature, with a shudder; "there was my poor Catherine still to take!"

"Your daughter?"

"You will hear—you will hear! Three days ago, as I was at work with my children round me, my husband came in. I saw by his look that he had been drinking. 'I have come for Catherine,' says he. I took my daughter's arm, and I said to Duport, 'Where do you want to take her to?' 'What's that to you?—she's my daughter. Let her make up her bundle and come along with me.' At these words my blood ran cold in my veins; for you must know, Lorraine, that that bad woman is still with my husband, and it makes me shudder all over to say it. But so it was; she had long been urging him to earn something by our daughter, who is young and pretty. 'Take away Catherine?' said I to Duport; 'never! I know what that wicked woman would do with her.' 'I say,' said my husband, whose lips were white with rage, 'do not oppose me or I'll kill you!' and then he seized my daughter by the arm, saying, 'Come along, Catherine!' The poor child threw her arms round my neck, and burst into tears, exclaiming, 'I will stay with mother!' When he saw this, Duport became furious, tore my daughter from me, and hit me a blow in my stomach, which knocked me down; and when I was on the ground—he was very drunk, you may be sure—he trampled on me and hurt me dreadfully. My poor children begged for mercy on their knees—Catherine, too; and then he said to her, swearing like a lunatic, 'If you will

not come with me I'll do for your mother!' I was spitting blood; I felt half dead, and could not move an inch. But I cried to Catherine, 'Let him kill me first!' 'What! you won't be quiet?' said Duport, giving me another kick, which deprived me of all consciousness; and when I returned to myself, I found my two little boys crying bitterly."

"And your daughter?"

"Gone!" exclaimed the unhappy mother, with convulsive sobs. "Yes; gone. My other children told me that their father had beaten them and threatened to finish me. Then the poor girl was quite distracted and embraced me and her brothers, weeping dreadfully; and then my husband dragged her away. Ah! that bad woman was waiting for him on the stairs, I know!"

"And didn't you complain to the police?"

"At first I felt only grief at Catherine's departure; but I felt soon great pain in all my limbs—I could not walk. Alas! what I had so long dreaded had happened! Yes, I told my brother that one day my husband would beat me so that I should be obliged to go to the hospital—and then what would become of my children? And now here I am in the hospital, and what, indeed, will become of my children? The neighbours went for the commissary, who came. I didn't like to denounce Duport, but I was obliged, in consequence of my daughter; only I said that in our quarrel about our daughter he had *pushed* me, that it was nothing, but I wanted my daughter Catherine because I feared the bad woman with whom my husband lived would be the ruin of her."

"Well, and what did the commissary say?"

"Why, that my husband had a right to take away his daughter, as we were not separated; that it would be a misfortune if my daughter turned out badly from evil counsels, but that they were only suppositions after all, and that was not sufficient for a complaint against my husband. 'You

have but one way—plead in the courts, demand a separation—and then the beatings your husband has given you, his behaviour with a vile woman, will be in your favour, and they will force him to restore your daughter to you; but, otherwise, he has a right to keep her with him.' 'But how can I plead when I have my children to feed?' 'What can be done?' said the clerk; 'that's the only way!'" and poor Jeanne sobbed bitterly, adding, "And he is right—that is the only way! And so, in three months, my daughter may be walking the streets, whilst if I could plead and be separated it would not happen. Alas! poor Catherine! so gentle and so affectionate!"

"Oh! you have, indeed, a bitter sorrow; and yet I was complaining!" said La Lorraine, drying her eyes. "And your other children?"

"Why, on their account, I did all I could to bear the pains I was suffering, and not go to the hospital; but I could not go on. I vomited blood three or four times a-day, and a fever took away the use of my arms and legs, and I was at last unable to work. If I am quickly cured I may return to my children, if they are not first dead from hunger or locked up as beggars. Who will maintain them whilst I am here?"

"Oh! it is very terrible! Have you no kind neighbours?"

"They are as poor as myself, and have five children already. It is very hard, but they promised to do a little something for them for a week; that is all they could do. And so, cured or not cured, I must go out in a week."

"But your friend, Mademoiselle Rigolette?"

"Unfortunately, she is in the country, and going to be married, the porter said. No, I must be cured in eight days; and I asked all the doctors who spoke to me yesterday, but they laughed as they replied, 'You must ask the principal surgeon.' When will he come, Lorraine?"

"Hush! I think I hear him now. And no one is allowed to speak during his visit," replied Lorraine, in a low voice.

The daylight had appeared during the conversation of the two women. A bustle announced the arrival of Dr. Griffon, who entered the room accompanied by his friend the Comte de Saint-Rémy, who took so warm an interest in Madame de Fermont and her daughter, but was very far from expecting to find the unfortunate young lady in the hospital. As he entered the ward, the cold and harsh features of Dr. Griffon seemed to expand. Casting around him a look of satisfaction and authority, he answered the obsequious reception of the sisters by a protecting nod. The coarse and austere countenance of the old Comte de Saint-Rémy was imprinted with the deepest sorrow. His ineffective attempts to find any traces of Madame de Fermont, and the ignominious baseness of the vicomte, who had preferred a life of infamy to death, overwhelmed him with grief.

"Well," said Dr. Griffon to him, with an air of triumph, "what do you think of my hospital?"

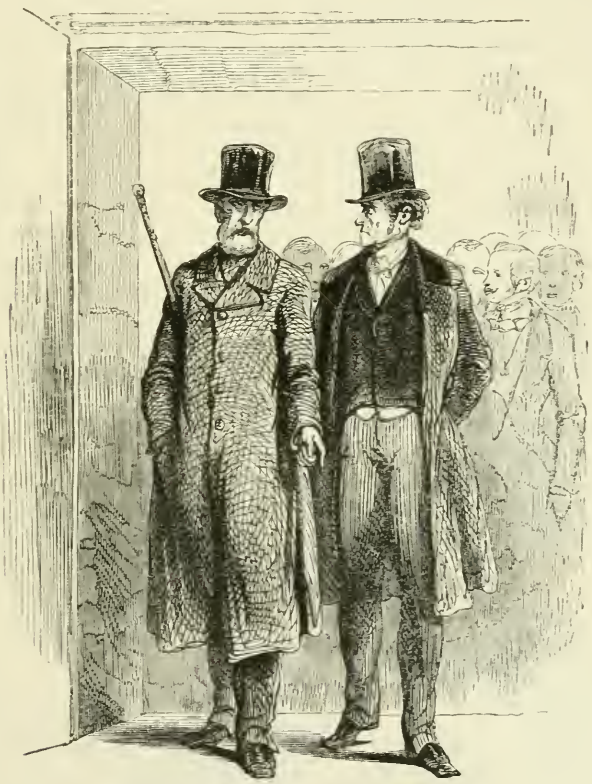
"Really," replied M. de Saint-Rémy, "I do not know why I yielded to your desire; nothing is more harrowing than the sight of rooms filled with sick persons. Since I entered my feelings have been severely distressed."

"Bah! bah! in a quarter of an hour you will think no more of it.

You, who are a philosopher, will find here ample matter for observation ; and besides, it would have been a shame for you, one of my oldest friends, not to have known the theatre of my glory, my labours, and seen me at work. I take pride in my profession — is that wrong ?"

"No, certainly ; and after your excellent care of Fleur-de-Marie, whom you have saved, I could refuse you nothing."

"Well, have you ascertained any thing as to the fate of Madame de Fermont and her daughter ?"



"Nothing!" replied M. de Saint-Rémy, with a sigh. "And my last hope is in Madame d'Harville, who takes such deep interest in these two unfortunates ; she may find some traces of them. Madame d'Harville, I hear, is expected daily at her house ; and I have written to her on the subject, begging her to reply as soon as possible."

During the conversation between M. de Saint-Rémy and Dr. Griffon, several groups were formed gradually around a large table in the middle of the apartment, on which was a register in which the pupils of the hospital (who were to be recognised by their long white aprons) came in their turns to sign the *attendance-sheet*.

"You see, my dear Saint-Rémy, that my staff is pretty considerable."

"It is indeed! But all these beds are occupied by women, and the presence of so many men must inspire them with painful confusion!"

"All these fine feelings must be left at the door, my dear Alcestis. Here we begin on the living those experiments and studies which we complete on the dead body in the amphitheatre."

"Doctor, you are one of the best and worthiest of men, and I owe you my life, and I recognise all your excellent qualities; but the practice and love of your art makes you take views of certain questions which are most revolting to me. I leave you. These are things which disgust and pain me; and I foresee that it would be a real punishment to me to be present at your visit. I will wait for you here at the table."

"What a strange person you are with these scruples! but I will not let you have quite your own way. So remain here till I come for you."

"Now, then, gentlemen," said Doctor Griffon; and he began his round, followed by his numerous auditory.

On reaching the first bed on the right hand, the curtains of which were closed, the sister said to the doctor,—

"Sir, No. 1 died at half-past four o'clock this morning."

"So late? it astonishes me. Yesterday morning I would not have have given her the day through. Has her body been claimed?"

"No, sir."

"So much the better. It is a very fine one; we will not dissect it, but I will make a man happy." Then turning to one of the pupils, "My dear Dunoyer, you have long desired a subject; your name is down for the first, and it is yours."

"Oh, sir, you are too good."

"I am only desirous of rewarding your zeal, my dear fellow; but mark the subject—take possession; there are so many who covet it."

As the doctor passed onwards, the pupil, with his scalpel, incised very delicately an F. and D. (his initials) on the arm of the defunct

actress, in order "to take possession," as the doctor termed it. And the round continued.

"Lorraine," said Jeanne Duport, in a low voice, to her neighbour, "who is all this crowd of people with the surgeon?"

"It is pupils and students."

"Oh! will all these young men look on whilst the doctor asks me questions and examines me?"

"Alas, yes!"

"But it is in my chest that I am ill; will they examine me before all these men?"

"Yes—yes—it must be so. I cried bitterly the first time, and thought I should have died of shame. I resisted, and they threatened to send me away, and that made me so ill. Only imagine, almost naked before every body! it is very painful."

"Before the doctor alone I can easily comprehend it is necessary, and even that is a great deal to submit to; but why before all these young men?"

"They learn and practise on us; that is why we are here—why they admit us into the hospital."

"Ah! I understand," said Jeanne Duport, with bitterness; "they give us nothing for nothing. Yet still there are times when even that could not be. Suppose my poor girl Catherine, who is only fifteen, were to come to the hospital, would they dare with her, before so many young men, to —— Oh! no! I would rather see her die at home!"

"Oh, if she came here she must make up her mind to do as the others do—as you and I. But hold your tongue—if the poor young lady in front hears you—they say she was rich, and, perhaps, has never left her mother before—and yet her turn comes now. Only think how confused and distressed she will be."

"I shudder when I think of her! Poor child!"

"Hush, Jeanne! here is the doctor!" said Lorraine.

After having quickly visited several patients who presented nothing remarkable in their cases, the doctor at last came to Jeanne. At the sight of this crowd coming around her bed, anxious to see and learn, the poor creature, overcome with fear and shame, pulled the bed-clothes tightly around her. The severe and meditative countenance of the doctor, his penetrating glance, his eyebrows, always drawn down by his reflective habit, his abrupt mode of speech, impatient and quick, increased the alarm of poor Jeanne.

"A new *subject!*" said the doctor, as he read the placard in which was inscribed the nature of the patient's malady, and throwing on Jeanne a lengthened look of scrutiny. There was a profound silence amongst the assistants, who, in imitation of the *prince of science*, fixed a scrutinising glance on the patient. After an examination of several minutes, the doctor, remarking something wrong in the yellow tint of the patient's eyeball, approached her more closely, and raising the lid with his finger, examined it silently. Then several of the students, responding to the kind of mute invitation of their professor, drew near, and gazed at Jeanne's eye with attention. The doctor then began:—

"Your name?"

"Jeanne Duport," she murmured, more and more alarmed.

"Are you married?"

"Alas! yes, sir," with a profound sigh.

"Have you any children?"

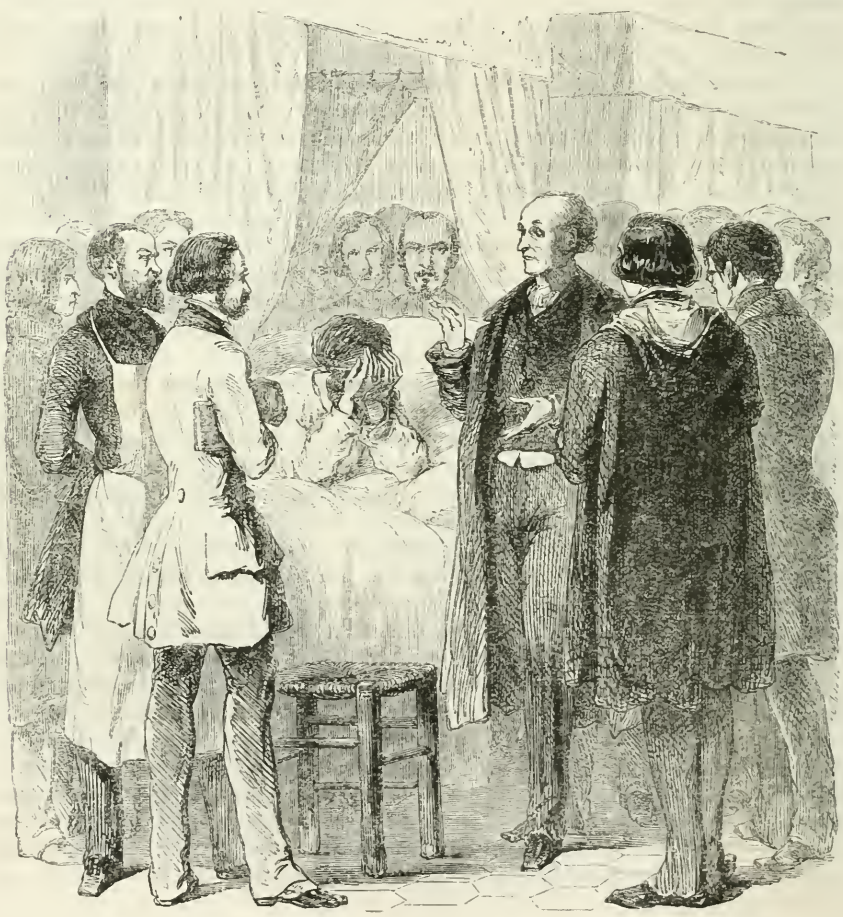
Here, instead of replying, the poor mother gave way to a flood of tears.

"It is no use crying—answer! Have you any children?"

"Yes, sir—two little boys, and a girl of sixteen."

Then followed a string of questions impossible to repeat, but to which Jeanne could only reply in stammering, and after many severe rebukes from the doctor. The poor woman was overwhelmed with shame, compelled as she was to reply aloud to such questions before such a numerous auditory.

The doctor, completely absorbed by scientific feelings, did not give the smallest heed to Jeanne's distress, and continued:—



"How long have you been ill?"

"Four days, sir," replied Jeanne, drying her tears.

"Tell us how your illness first disclosed itself."

"Sir—why—there are so many persons here, that I dare not."

"Pooh! where do you come from, my dear woman?" inquired the doctor, impatiently; "would you like to have a confessional brought? Come, come!—make haste!"

"Sir, these are family matters."

"Oh, be easy, we are all family men here; a large family, too, as you see," added the prince of science, who was in very high spirits that day. "Come, come, let us have an end of this."

More and more alarmed, Jeanne, stammering and hesitating at each moment, said,—

"I had—a quarrel with my husband—about the children; I mean my eldest daughter, that he wanted to take away; and I wouldn't agree, because of a wicked woman he lived with, and who might give bad advice to my daughter. So then my husband, who was tipsy—yes, sir—for if not, he'd never have done it—my husband gave me a very hard push, and I fell; and then, soon after, I began to vomit blood."

"Pooh, pooh, pooh! your husband pushed you, and you fell: you describe it very nicely! Why, he did more than push you; he must have struck you in the stomach: perhaps trampled on you, or kicked you? Come, answer—let's have the truth."

"Oh, sir, I assure you that he was tipsy; but for that he would never have been so wicked."

"Good or wicked, drunk or sober, it is not to the purpose, my good woman. I am not a public officer, and only want a fact accurately described. Now, were you not knocked down, and trampled under foot?"

"Yes!" said Jeanne, weeping; "and yet I never gave him any cause of complaint. I worked as long as I could, and——"

"The *epigastrium* must be very painful. Don't you feel great heat round that region?—uneasiness, lassitude, nausea?"

"Yes, sir. I was quite worn out when I gave up, if not, I should never have left my children; and then my Catherine! Oh, if you——'

"Put out your tongue," said the doctor, again interrupting the patient.

This appeared so strange to Jeanne, who thought to excite the doctor's pity, that she did not reply immediately, but looked at him with alarm.

"Shew me your tongue, which you know so well how to use," said the doctor, with a smile; and he pushed down Jeanne's lower jaw with the end of his finger. After having had his pupils successively, and for some time, feel and examine the subject's tongue, in order to ascertain its colour and dryness, Jeanne, overcoming her fear for a moment, said in a tremulous voice,—

"Sir, I was going to say to you, my neighbours, who are as poor as myself, have been so kind as to take care of my children for a week only, which is a great deal; so at the end of that time I must be back home again. So I beg of you, in God's name, to cure me as quickly as you can, or nearly so, that I may return to work; and I have but a week before me —— for —— "

"Discoloured face—complete state of prostration—yet the pulse strong, quick, and regular," said the doctor, imperturbably, and pointing to Jeanne. "Remark her well, gentlemen: oppression, heat in the epigastric regions. All these symptoms certainly betoken *hæmatemesis*, probably complicated by hepatitis, caused by domestic troubles, as is indicated by the yellow discoloration of the eyeball. The subject has had violent blows in the regions of the epigastrium and abdomen: the vomiting blood is the necessary consequence of some organic injury to the viscera. On this point let me call your attention to a very curious, remarkably curious, feature. The *post-mortem* appearances of those who die of the injuries under which the subject is suffering frequently present remarkable appearances: frequently the malady, very severe and very dangerous, carries off the patient in a few days, and then no trace of it is found."

Doctor Griffon then, throwing off the bed-clothes, nearly denuded poor Jeanne. It would be repugnant to describe the struggle of the unfortunate creature, who, in her shame, implored the doctor and his auditory. But at the threat, '*You will be turned out of the hospital, if you do not submit to the established usages*,'—a threat so terrible for those to whom the hospital is the sole and last refuge—Jeanne submitted to a public scrutiny, which lasted a long time, very long, for Doctor Griffon analysed and explained every symptom; and then the most studious of the pupils declared their wish to unite practice with theory, and also examine the patient. The end of this scene was that poor Jeanne felt such extreme emotion, that she fell into a nervous crisis, for which Doctor Griffon gave an extra prescription.

The round continued, and the doctor soon reached the bed of Mademoiselle Claire de Fermont, a victim, like her mother, to the cupidity of

Jacques Ferrand. Mademoiselle de Fermont, dressed in a cap of the hospital, was leaning her head languidly on the bolster of the bed. In spite of the ravages of her malady, there might be detected on her open and sweet countenance the traces of a beauty full of distinction. After a night of keen anguish, the poor girl had fallen into a kind of feverish stupor, and when the doctor and his scientific train entered the ward she was not aroused by the noise.

"Another first subject, gentlemen," said the prince of science. "Disease, *a slow nervous fever;* if the receiving surgeon is not mistaken in the symptoms, this is a real godsend. For a long time I have desired a slow nervous fever, for that is not an ordinary complaint amongst the poor. These affections are usually produced after severe trouble in the social position of the subject, and I need hardly add that the higher the position of the patient, the more deep is the disease. It is, moreover, a complaint the more remarkable from its peculiar characteristics. It is traced to the very remotest antiquity, and the writings of Hippocrates have no doubt reference to it. This fever, I repeat, has almost always been produced from the most violent grief, and grief is as old as the world. Yes, strange to say, before the eighteenth century, this disease was never accurately described by any author; it was Huxham, whom the science of medicine of the age so highly honours—Huxham, I say, who first defined accurately nervous fever; and yet it is a malady of the olden time," added the doctor, jocosely. "Eh, eh, eh! it belongs to the great, antique, and illustrious family of *febris*, whose origin is lost in the darkness of ages. But we may be rejoicing too soon; let us see if really we have the good fortune to possess here a sample of this curious affection; it would be doubly desirable, inasmuch as, for a very long time, I have been anxious to try the effect of the internal use of phosphorus. Yes, gentlemen," continued the doctor, hearing amongst his auditory a kind of shudder of curiosity,—"yes, gentlemen, of phosphorus; it is a singular experiment that I wish to try, and a bold one, and but *audaces fortuna juvat*, and the opportunity would be excellent. We will first try if the subject offers in all parts of the body, and particularly in the chest, that miliary eruption, so symptomatic according to Huxham, and you will assure yourselves, by feeling the subject, of the kind of uneven surface which this eruption produces. But do not let us sell the skin of our bear before we have killed it," added the prince of science, who was decidedly in very high spirits. And he shook Mademoiselle de Fermont's shoulder very gently, in order to wake her.

The young girl started and opened her large eyes, hollowed by the malady. It is impossible to describe her amaze and alarm. Whilst a crowd of men surrounded her bed, all fixing their eyes upon her, she felt the doctor's hand gliding under the quilt into her bed, in order to take her hand and feel her pulse. Mademoiselle de Fermont, collecting all her strength, in a cry of anguish exclaimed,—

"Mother!—help!—mother!—mother!"

By an almost providential chance, at the moment when the cries of Mademoiselle de Fermont made the old Count de Saint-Rémy spring from his chair, for he recognised the voice, the door of the apartment opened, and a young lady, dressed in mourning, entered very hastily,

accompanied by the governor of the hospital: this lady was the Marquise d'Harville.

"I beg of you, sir," she said to him, "to lead me to Mademoiselle de Fermont."

"Be so kind as to follow me," he replied, respectfully; "the young lady is in No. 17."

"Unhappy girl! Here—here!" said Madame d'Harville, drying her tears. "Ah, this is really frightful!"

The marquise, preceded by the governor, rapidly approached the group assembled beside the bed of Mademoiselle de Fermont, when they heard these words uttered with indignation,—

"I tell you it is infamous murder; you will kill her, sir!"

"But, my dear Saint-Rémy, do pray hear me!"

"I repeat, sir, that your conduct is atrocious! I consider Mademoiselle de Fermont as my daughter, and I forbid you going near her; I will have her immediately removed hence."

"But, my dear friend, it is a case of slow nervous fever, very rare; I am desirous of trying phosphorus. It is an unique occasion. Promise me, at least, that I shall have the care of her, and take her where you like, since you are determined to deprive us of so valuable a clinical subject."

"If you were not a madman, you would be a monster!" replied the count.

Clémence listened to these words with increasing anguish, but the crowd was so dense around the bed that the governor was obliged to say, in a loud voice,—

"Make way, if you please, for the Marquise d'Harville, who has come to see No. 17."

At these words, the pupils made way with equal haste and respectful admiration when they saw Clémence's lovely face, which was radiant with so much emotion.

"Madame d'Harville!" exclaimed the Count de Saint-Rémy, pushing the doctor rudely aside, and going hastily towards Clémence. "Ah, it is God who sends one of his angels here! Madame, I knew you took an interest in these two unfortunate beings, and, more happy than me, you have found them, whilst it was chance only that led me hither, to be present at a scene of unparalleled barbarity. Unhappy child! See, madame; and you, gentlemen, in the name of your sisters and daughters, have pity, I entreat, on a girl of sixteen, and leave her alone with madame and these good sisters; when she recovers her senses, I will have her conveyed hence.

"Very well, let it be so; I will sign her discharge!" exclaimed the doctor; "but I will not lose sight of her: she is a subject of mine, and I will attend her, do what you will. I'll not risk the phosphorus, I promise that; but I will pass my nights, if needs be, as I passed them with you, ungrateful Saint-Rémy, for this fever is as curious as yours was: they are two sisters, who have an equal right to my interest."

"Confound the man! Why has he so much science?" said the count, knowing that he could not confide the young girl to more able hands.

"Eh! It is simple enough," said the doctor, in a whisper. "I have a great deal of science because I study, because I experimentalise, because I risk and practise a great deal on my *subjects;* and so, old fellow, I shall still have my slow nervous fever,—eh?"

"Yes; but is it safe to move this young girl?"

"Certainly."

"Then, for the love of Heaven, disappear with your train!"

"Come, gentlemen," said the prince of science, "we shall be deprived of a precious study; but I will make my reports on it to you." And Dr. Griffon, with his suite, continued his round, leaving M. de Saint-Rémy and Madame d'Harville with Mademoiselle de Fermont.

During this scene, Mademoiselle de Fermont, still in a swoon, had

been attended to by Clémence and the two nuns. Saint-Rémy said in a low tone to Clémence,—

"And the mother of this unhappy girl, madame?"

The marchioness replied, in a voice deeply affected,—

"She has no longer a mother, sir. I learnt yesterday only, on my return, the address of Madame de Fermont, and her dying condition; at one o'clock in the morning, I went to her with a medical-man. Ah, sir, what a fiction! It was misery in all its horror! And no hope of saving the poor mother, whose last words were, 'My daughter!'"

"What a death! Good Heaven! And she so tender, so devoted a mother,—it is frightful!"

"I will watch her until she can be moved," said Clémence, "and, when she can be removed, I will take her with me."

"Ah, madame! bless you for what you say and do!" said M. de Saint-Rémy. "But excuse me for not having before mentioned my name to you, I am the Comte de Saint-Rémy; Madame de Fermont's husband was my most intimate friend. I live at Angers, and left that city from uneasiness at not receiving any news of these two noble and excellent women; they had until then lived in that city, and were said to be completely ruined, which was the more terrible as until then they had lived in ease and plenty."

"Ah, sir! you do not know all; Madame de Fermont was shamefully robbed."

"By her notary, perhaps? I had my suspicions."

"That man was a monster, sir! Alas! that was not the only crime he committed; but fortunately," said Clémence, with excitement, as she thought of Rodolph, "a providential genius had compelled him to do justice, and I was enabled to close Madame de Fermont's eyes, assuring

her as to the future provision for her daughter; thus her death was rendered less cruel."

"I understand; knowing her daughter to have your support henceforth, my poor friend died more tranquil."

"Not only is my interest excited for ever towards Mademoiselle de Fermont, but her fortune will be restored to her."

"Her fortune! The notary ——"

"Has been compelled to refund the money. This man had caused the assassination of Madame de Fermont's brother, in order to make it appear that the unhappy man had committed suicide, after having dissipated his sister's fortune; but he has now placed the sum in the hands of the worthy curé of Bonne-Nouvelle, and it will be given to Mademoiselle de Fermont. The infamous wretch has committed another murder equally infamous!"

"What mean you, madame?"

"But a few days since, he got rid of an unfortunate young girl whom he had an interest in drowning, assured that her death would be attributed to accident."

M. de Saint-Rémy started, looked at Madame d'Harville with surprise as he recollected Fleur-de-Marie, and exclaimed,—

"Ah, madame, what a singular coincidence! This young girl they sought to drown——"

"In the Seine, near Asnières, as I am told."

"'Tis she! 'tis she!" cried Saint-Rémy.

"Of whom do you speak, sir?"

"Of the young girl whom this monster sought to drown. Do you know her, madame?"

"Poor dear! I love her tenderly. Ah, if you knew, sir, how lovely, how prepossessing she was! But tell me what you mean?"

"Doctor Griffon and I gave her the first assistance."

"First assistance to her!—and in what way?"

"At the Ile de Ravageur, where she was saved."

"Saved! Fleur-de-Marie saved?"

"By a worthy creature, who, at the risk of her life, saved her from the Seine. But what ails you, madame?"

"Ah, sir! I fear to believe in such good fortune; but, I pray of you, tell me what is the appearance of this young girl?"

"Singularly beautiful!"

"Large blue eyes—light brown hair?"

"Yes, madame."

"And when she was drowned there was an elderly woman with her?"

"It was only yesterday she was well enough to speak, and she is still very weak; she said an elderly woman accompanied her."

"Praised be Heaven!" said Clémence, clasping her hands with fervour; "I can now tell *him* that his *protégée* still lives! What joy for him who, in his last letter, spoke to me of this poor child with such bitter regrets! Excuse me, sir, but you know not how happy your intelligence renders me, and will make a person who, more than myself, has loved and protected Fleur-de-Marie. But, for mercy's sake tell me, where is she at this moment?"

"Near Asnières, in the house of one of the surgeons of this hospital, Dr. Griffon; she was taken there, and has had every attention."

"And is she out of danger?"

"Yes, madame, but only during the last two or three days, and to-day she will be permitted to write to her protector."

"Oh, I will undertake to do that, sir; or rather I shall have the pleasure of taking her to those who, believing her dead, regret her so bitterly!"

"I can understand those regrets, madame, for it is impossible to see Fleur-de-Marie without being charmed with her grace and sweetness. The woman who saved her, and has since watched her night and day as she would an infant, is a courageous and devoted person, but of a disposition so excitable that she has been called La Louve."

"I know La Louve," said the marquise, smiling as she thought of the pleasure she had in store for the prince. What would have been her ecstasy, had she known she was the daughter he believed dead that she was about to restore to Rodolph! Then, addressing the nun who had

given some spoonsful of a draught to Mademoiselle de Fermont, she said, "Well, sister, is she recovering?"

"Not yet, madame, she is so weak. Poor, young thing! one can scarcely feel her pulse beat."

"I will wait then until she is sufficiently restored to be put into my carriage; but tell me, sister, amongst these unfortunate patients, do you know any who particularly deserve interest and pity, and to whom I could be useful before I leave the hospital?"

"Ah, madame, Heaven has sent you here!" said the sister. "There," and she pointed to the bed of Pique-Vinaigre's sister, "is a poor woman much to be pitied, and very bad; she only came in when quite exhausted, and is past all comfort, because she has been obliged to abandon her two small children, who have no other support in the world. She said just now to the doctor that she must go out, cured or not, in a week, because her neighbours had promised to take care of her children for that time only and no longer."

"Take me to her bed, I beg of you, sister," said Madame d'Harville, rising, and following the nun.

Jeanne Duport, who had scarcely recovered from the violent shock which the investigations of Dr. Griffon had caused her, had not remarked the entrance of Madame d'Harville; what, then, was her astonishment, when the marquise, lifting up the curtains of her bed, and looking at her with great pity and kindness, said,—

"My good woman, do not be uneasy about your children, I will take care of them; so only think of getting well, that you may go to them."

Poor Jeanne thought she was in a dream, she could only clasp her hands in speechless gratitude, and gaze on her unknown benefactress.

"Once again assure yourself, my worthy woman, and have no uneasiness," said the marquise, pressing in her small and delicate white hands the burning hand of Jeanne Duport; "and, if you prefer it, you shall leave the hospital this very day and be nursed at home; every thing shall be done for you, so that you need not leave your children; and, if your lodging is unhealthy or too small, you shall have one found that is more convenient and suitable, so that you may be in one room and your children in another; you shall have a good nurse, who will watch them whilst she attends to you, and, when you entirely recover, if you are out of work, I will take care that you are provided for until work comes, and I will also take care of your children for the future."

"Ah, what do I hear?" said Jeanne Duport, all trembling and hardly daring to look her benefactress in the face. "Why are so many kindnesses showered on me? It is not possible! I leave the hospital, where I have wept and suffered so much, and not leave my children again!—have a nurse!—why it is a miracle!"

"It is no miracle, my good woman," said Clémence, much affected. "What I do for you," she added, blushing slightly at the remembrance of Rodolph, "is inspired by a generous spirit, who has taught me to sympathise with misfortune, and it is he whom you should thank."

"Ah, madame, I shall ever bless you!" said Jeanne, weeping.

"Well, then, you see, Jeanne," said Lorraine, much affected, "there are also amongst the rich, Rigolettes and Goualeuses with good hearts."

Madame d'Harville turned with much surprise towards Lorraine when she heard her mention the two names.

"Do you know La Goualeuse and a young workwoman called Rigolette?" she inquired of Lorraine.

"Yes, madame; La Goualeuse—good little angel!—did for the last year, according to her small means, what you are going to do for Jeanne. Yes, madame, and it does me good to say and repeat it to every body, La Goualeuse took me from a cellar in which I had been brought to bed on the straw, and—dear, good girl!—placed me and my child in a room where there was a good bed and a cradle; La Goualeuse spent the money from pure charity, for she scarcely knew me, and was poor herself. But how good it was! was it not, madame?" said Lorraine.

"Yes, yes; charity from the poor to the poor is great and holy!" said Clémence, with her eyes moistened by soft tears.

"It was the same with Mademoiselle Rigolette, who, according to her little means as a sempstress," said Lorraine, "some days ago offered her kind services to Jeanne."

"How singular!" said Clémence to herself, more and more affected, for each of these two names, Goualeuse and Rigolette, reminded her of a noble action of Rodolph. "And you, my child, what can I do for you?" she said to Lorraine; "I could wish that the names you pronounce with so much gratitude should also bring you good fortune."

"Thank you, madame," said Lorraine, with a smile of bitter resignation; "I had a child, it is dead; I am in a decline and past all hope."

"What a gloomy idea! At your age, there is always hope."

"Oh, no, madame, I saw a consumptive patient die last night. Yet as you are so good, a great lady like you must be able to do any thing."

"Tell me, what do you wish?"

"Since I have seen the actress who is dead so distressed at the idea of being cut in pieces after her death, I have the same fear. Jeanne had promised to claim my body, and have me buried."

"Ah, this is horrible!" said Clémence, shuddering. "Be tranquil, although I hope the time is far distant, yet, when it comes, be assured that your body shall rest in holy ground."

"Oh, thank you — thank you, madame!" exclaimed Lorraine. "Might I beg to kiss your hand?"

Clémence presented her hand to the parched lips of Lorraine.

Half an hour afterwards, Madame d'Harville, who had been painfully affected by Lorraine's condition, accompanied by M. de Saint-Rémy, took with her the young orphan, from whom she concealed her mother's death.

The same day, Madame d'Harville's man of business, after having obtained favourable particulars respecting Jeanne Duport's character, hired for her some large and airy rooms, and the same evening she was conveyed to her new residence, where she found her children and a nurse. The same individual was instructed to claim and inter the body of Lorraine when she died. After having conveyed Mademoiselle de Fermont to her own house, Madame d'Harville started for Asnières with M. de Saint-Rémy, in order to go to Fleur-de-Marie, and take her to Rodolph.

CHAPTER LV.

HOPE.

Spring was approaching, and already the sun darted a more genial warmth, the sky was blue and clear, while the balmy air seemed to bring life and breath upon its invigorating wings. Among the many sick and suffering who rejoiced in its cheering presence was Fleur-de-Marie, who, leaning on the arm of La Louve, ventured to take gentle exercise

in the little garden belonging to Dr. Griffon's house; the vivifying rays of the sun, added to the exertion of walking, tinged the pale, wasted countenance of La Goualeuse with a faint glow that spoke of returning convalescence. The dress she had worn when rescued from a watery grave had been destroyed in the haste with which the requisite attempts

had been made for her resuscitation, and she now appeared in a loose wrapping dress of dark blue merino, fastened round her slender waist by worsted cord of the same colour as the robe.

"How cheering the sun shines!" said she to La Louve, as she stopped beneath a thick row of trees, planted beside a high gravelled walk facing the south, and on which was a stone bench. "Shall we sit down and rest ourselves here a few minutes?"

"Why do you ask me?" replied La Louve, almost angrily; then taking off her nice warm shawl, she folded it in four, and, kneeling down, placed it on the ground, which was somewhat moist from the extreme shelter afforded by the overhanging trees, saying, as she did so, "Here, put your feet on this."

"Oh, but La Louve!" said Fleur-de-Marie, perceiving too late the kind intention of her companion, "I cannot suffer you to spoil your beautiful shawl in that way."

"Don't make a fuss about nothing; I tell you the ground is cold and moist. There, that will do." And, taking the tiny feet of Fleur-de-Marie, she forcibly placed them on her shawl.

"You spoil me terribly, La Louve."

"It is not for your good behaviour, if I do; always trying to oppose me in every thing I try to do for your good. Are you not very much tired? We have been walking more than half an hour; I heard twelve o'clock just strike from Asnières."

"I do feel rather weary, but still the walk has done me good."

"There now—you were tired, and yet could not tell me so!"

"Pray don't scold me; I assure you I was not conscious of my weariness until I spoke. It is so delightful to be able to walk out in the air, after being confined by sickness to your bed, to see the trees, the green fields, and the beautiful country again, when you had given up all hope of ever enjoying that happiness, or of feeling the warm beams of the sun fill you with strength and hope!"

"Certainly, you were desperately ill, and for two days we despaired of your life. I don't mind telling you, now the danger is over."

"Only imagine, La Louve, that, when I found myself in the water, I could not help thinking of a very bad, wicked woman, who used to torment me when I was young, and frighten me by threatening to throw me to the fishes that they might eat me, and, even after I had grown up, she wanted to drown me; and I kept thinking that it was my destiny to be devoured by fishes, and that it was no use to try and escape from it."

"Was that really your last idea when you believed yourself perishing?"

"Oh, no!" replied Fleur-de-Marie, with enthusiasm; "when I believed I was dying, my last thought was for him whom I so reverence, and to whom I owe so much, and, when I came to myself after you had saved me, my first thought was of him likewise."

"It is a pleasure to render you any service, you think so much of it."

"No, La Louve; the pleasure consists in falling asleep with our grateful recollection of kind acts, and remembering them upon waking!"

"Ah, you would induce people to go through fire and water to serve you! I'm sure I would, for one."

"I can assure you that one of the causes which made me thankful for

life was the hope of being able to advance your happiness. Do you recollect the castles in the air we used to build at Saint-Lazare?"

"Oh, as for that, there is time enough to think about that."

"How delighted I should be, if the Doctor would only allow me to write a few lines to Madame Georges, I am sure she must be so very uneasy; and so must M. Rodolph too," added Fleur-de-Marie, pensively sighing. "Perhaps they think me dead."

"As those wretches do who were set on to murder you!"

"Then you still believe my falling into the water was not an accident?"

"Accident! Yes, one of the Martial family's accidents;—mind, when I say that, you must bear in mind that *my* Martial is not at all like the rest of his relations, any more than François and Amandine."

"But what interest could they have had in my death?"

"I don't care for that; the Martials are such a vile set that they would murder any one, provided they were well paid for it. A few words the mother let drop when my man went to see her in prison prove that."

"Has he really been to see that dreadful woman?"

"Yes; and he tells me there is no hope of pardon for herself, Calabash, or Nicholas. A great many things have been discovered against them; and all the judges and those kind of people say they want to make a public example of them, to frighten others from doing such things."

"How very shocking for nearly a whole family to perish in this way!"

"And they certainly will, unless, indeed, Nicholas manages to make his escape; he is in the same prison with a monstrous ruffian whom they call the Skeleton, and this man is getting up a plot to escape with several of his companions. Nicholas sent to tell Martial of this, by a prisoner who was discharged from prison the other day, for, I must tell

you, my man had been weak enough to go and see his brother in La Force; so, encouraged by this visit, that hateful wretch Nicholas sent to tell my man that he might effect his escape at any minute, and that his brother was to send money and clothes to disguise himself in, ready for him, to Father Micou's."

"Ah, your Martial is so kind-hearted, I'm sure he will do it!"

"A fig for such kind-heartedness! I call it downright foolery to help the very man who tried to take his life. No, no, Martial shall do no such thing; quite enough if he does not tell of the scheme for breaking out of prison, without furnishing clothes and money indeed! Besides, now you are out of danger, myself, Martial, and the two children, are about to start on our rambles over France in search of work, and, depend upon it, we never mean to set our feet in Paris again. Martial found it quite galling enough to be called the son of a man who was guillotined, how, then, could he endure being taunted with the disgraceful ends of all his family?"

"Well, but, at least, you will defer your departure till I have been enabled to see and speak with M. Rodolph; you have returned to virtue, and I promised you a reward if you would but forsake evil ways, and I wish to keep my word. You saved me from death, and, not satisfied with that, have nursed me with the tenderest care during my severe illness."

"Suppose I did; well, it would seem as though I had done the little good in my power for the sake of gain, were I to allow you to ask your friends for any thing for me! No, no; I say again I am more than repaid in seeing you safe and likely to do well."

"My kind Louve, make yourself perfectly easy; it shall not be said that you were influenced by interested motives, but that *I* was desirous of proving my gratitude to you."

"Hark!" said La Louve, hastily rising, "I fancy I hear the sound of a carriage coming this way; yes—yes, there it is! Did you observe the lady who was in it?"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, "I fancy I recognised a young and beautiful lady I saw at Saint-Lazare."

"Then she knows you are here, does she?"

"I cannot tell you whether she does or no, but one thing is very certain, that she is acquainted with the person I have so often mentioned to you, who, if he pleases, and I hope that he will please, can realise all those schemes of happiness we used to build when in prison."

"What about getting a gamekeeper's place for my man," asked La Louve, with a sigh; "and a cottage in the middle of the woods for us all to live in? Oh, no! that is too much like what we read of in fairy tales, and quite impossible ever to happen to a poor creature like myself."

Quick steps were heard advancing rapidly from behind the trees, and in a minute François and Amandine (who, thanks to the kind consideration of the Count de Saint-Rémy, had been permitted to remain with La Louve during her attendance on La Goualeuse) presented themselves, quite out of breath, exclaiming,—

"La Louve! here is a beautiful lady come along with M. de Saint-Rémy to see Fleur-de-Marie, and they want to see her directly!"

At the same moment, Madame d'Harville, accompanied by M. de

Saint-Rémy, appeared from the side of the walk, the impatience of the former not allowing her to wait the arrival of Fleur-de-Marie. Directly the marquise saw her, she ran and embraced her, exclaiming,—

"My poor, dear child! what happiness does it not afford me to find you thus in life and safety, when I believed you dead!"

"Be assured, madame," answered Fleur-de-Marie, as she gracefully and modestly returned the affectionate pressure of Madame d'Harville, "that I have equal pleasure in seeing again one whose former kindness has made so deep an impression on my heart!"

"Ah, you little imagine the joy and rapture with which the intelligence of your existence will be welcomed by those who have so bitterly bewailed your supposed loss!"

Fleur-de-Marie, taking La Louve, who had withdrawn to a distance from the affecting scene, by the hand, and presenting her to Madame d'Harville, said,—

"Since, madame, my benefactors are good enough to take so lively an interest in my welfare and preservation, permit me to solicit their kindness and favour for my companion, who saved my life at the expense of her own."

"Make yourself perfectly easy on that score, my child; your friends will amply testify to the worthy La Louve how fully they appreciate the service they well know she has rendered you, and that 'tis to her they owe the delight of seeing you again."

Confused and blushing, La Louve ventured neither to reply nor raise her eyes towards Madame d'Harville, so completely did the presence of that dignified person abash and overpower her; yet, at hearing her very name pronounced, La Louve could not restrain an exclamation of astonishment.

"But we have not a minute to lose," resumed the marquise; "I am dying with impatience to carry off Fleur-de-Marie, and I have a cloak and warm shawl for her in the carriage; so come, my child, come!" Then, addressing the count, she said, "May I beg of you to give my address to this brave woman, that she may be enabled to come to-morrow to say good-by to Fleur-de-Marie? That will oblige you to pay us a visit," continued Madame d'Harville, speaking to La Louve.

"Depend upon my coming, madame," replied the person addressed; "since it is to bid adieu to La Goualeuse, I should be grieved, indeed, if I were to miss that last pleasure."

A few minutes after this conversation, Madame d'Harville and La Goualeuse were on the road to Paris.

* * * * * *

After witnessing the frightful death by which Jacques Ferrand atoned for the heinous offences of his past life, Rodolph had returned home deeply agitated and affected. After passing a long and sleepless night, he sent to summon Sir Walter Murphy, in order to relieve his overcharged heart by confiding to this tried and trusty friend the overwhelmingly painful discovery of the preceding evening relative to Fleur-de-Marie. The honest squire was speechless with astonishment, he could well understand the deathblow this must be to the prince's best affections, and as he contemplated the pale, careworn countenance of his unhappy friend, whose red, swollen eyes and convulsed features amply bespoke the agony of his mind, he ransacked his brain for some gleam of comfort, and his invention for words of hope and comfort.

"Take courage, my lord," said he at last, drying his eyes, which, spite of all his accustomed coolness, he had not been able to prevent from overflowing,—"take courage; yours is indeed an infliction, one that mocks at all vain attempts at consolation,—it is deep, lasting, and incurable!"

"You are right; what I felt yesterday seems as nothing to my sense of misery to-day."

"Yesterday, my lord, you were stunned by the blow that fell on you, but as your mind dwells more calmly on it, so does the future seem more dark and dispiriting; I can but say, Rouse yourself, my lord, to bear it with courage, for it is beyond all attempts at consolation."

"Yesterday the contempt and horror I felt for that woman,—whom may the Great Being pardon, before whose tribunal she now stands,—

mingled with surprise, disgust, and terror, occasioned by her hideous conduct, repressed those bursts of despairing tenderness I can no longer restrain in your sympathising presence, my faithful friend; I fear not to indulge the natural emotions of my heart, and my hitherto pent-up tears may now freely vent themselves: forgive my weakness, and excuse my thus cowardly shrinking from the trial I am called upon to endure, but it seems to have riven my very heart-strings, and to have left me feeble as an infant! Oh, my child!—my loved, my lost child!—long must these scalding tears flow ere I can forget you!"

"Ah, my lord, weep on, for your loss is indeed irreparable!"

"What joy to have atoned to her for all the wretchedness with which her young days have been clouded! What bliss to have unfolded to her the happy destiny that was to recompense her for all her past sorrows! And, then, I should have used so much care and precaution in opening her eyes to the brilliant lot that was to succeed her miserable youth, for the tale, if told too abruptly, might have been too much for her delicate nerves to sustain; but, no, I would by degrees have revealed to her the history of her birth, and prepared her to receive me as her father!" Then, again bursting into an agony of despair, Rodolph continued, "But what avails all that I would have done, when I am tortured by the cruel reflection that when I had my child all to myself during the ill-fated day I conducted her to the farm, when she so innocently displayed the rich treasures of her pure and heavenly nature, no secret voice whispered to me that in her I beheld my cherished and lamented daughter? I might have prevented this dreadful calamity by keeping her with me instead of

sending her to Madame Georges. Oh, if I had, I should have been spared my present sufferings, and needed only to have opened my arms and folded her to my heart as my newly found treasure,—more really great and noble by the beauty of her heart and mind, and perhaps more worthy to fill the station to which I should raise her, than if she had always been reared in opulence and with a knowledge of her rank! I alone am to blame for her death; but mine is an accursed existence; I seem fated to trample on every duty,—a bad son and a bad father!"

Murphy felt that grief such as Rodolph's admitted of no ordinary consolation, he did not therefore attempt to interrupt its violence by any hackneyed phrases or promises of comfort he well knew could never be realised. After a long silence, Rodolph resumed, in an agitated voice,—

"I cannot stay here after what has happened, Paris is hateful to me; I will quit it to-morrow."

"You are quite right in so doing, my lord."

"We will go by a circuitous route, and I will stop at Bouqueval as I pass, that I may spend some few hours alone with my sad thoughts, in the chamber where my poor child enjoyed the only peaceful days she was ever permitted to taste. All that was hers shall be carefully collected together—the books from which she studied, her writings, clothes, even the very articles of furniture and hangings of the chamber; I will make a careful sketch of the whole, and when I return to Gerolstein I will construct a small building containing the fac-simile of my poor child's apartment, with all that it contained, to be erected in the private ground in which stands the monument built by me in memory of my outraged parent: there I will go and bewail my daughter. These two funeral mementos will for ever remind me of my crime towards my father, and the punishment inflicted on me through my own child." After a fresh silence, Rodolph said, "Let all be got ready for my departure to-morrow."

Anxious, if possible, to create if but a momentary change of ideas in the prince's mind, Murphy said, "All shall be prepared, my lord, according to your desire; only you appear to have forgotten that to-morrow is fixed for the celebration of the marriage of Rigolette with the son of Madame Georges, and that the ceremony was to take place at Bouqueval. Not contented with providing for Germain as long as he lives, and liberally endowing his bride, you also promised to be present to bestow the hand of your young *protégée* on her lover."

"True, true—I did engage to do so; but I confess I have not sufficient courage to venture in a scene of gaiety. I cannot, therefore, visit the farm to-morrow, for to join in the wedding festivities is impossible."

"Perhaps the scene might serve to calm your wounded feelings, with the thought that, if miserable yourself, you have made others happy."

"No, my friend, no! Grief is ever selfish, and loves to indulge itself in solitude. You shall supply my place to-morrow: and beg of Madame Georges to collect together all my poor child's possessions: then, when the room is fitly arranged, you will have an exact copy taken of it, and cause it to be sent to me in Germany."

"And will you not even see Madame d'Harville, my lord, ere you set out on your journey?"

At the recollection of Clémence, Rodolph started; his affection for her

burned as steadfastly and sincerely as ever, but, for the moment, it seemed buried beneath the overwhelming grief which oppressed him. The tender sympathy of Madame d'Harville appeared to him the only source of consolation; but, the next instant, he rejected the idea of seeking consolation in the love of another as unworthy his paternal sorrow.

"No, my kind friend, I shall not see Madame d'Harville previously to quitting Paris. I wrote to her a few days since, telling her of the death of Fleur-de-Marie, and the pain it had caused me. When she learns that the ill-fated girl was my long-lost daughter, she will readily understand that there are some griefs, or rather fatal punishments, it is requisite to endure alone."

A gentle knock was heard at the door at this minute. Rodolph, with displeasure at the interruption, signed for Murphy to ascertain who it was. The faithful squire immediately rose, and partly opening the door, perceived one of the prince's aides-du-camp, who said a few words in a low tone, to which Murphy replied by a motion of the head, and returning to Rodolph, said, "Have the goodness, my lord, to excuse me for an instant! A person wishes to see me directly on business that concerns your royal highness."

"Go!" replied the prince.

Scarcely had the door closed on Murphy, than Rodolph, covering his face with his hands, uttered a heavy groan.

"What horrible feelings possess me!" cried he. "My mind seems one vast ocean of gall and bitterness; the presence of my best and most faithful friend is painful to me; and the recollection of a love pure and elevated as mine distresses and embarrasses me. Last night, too, I was cowardly enough to learn the death of Sarah with savage joy. I felicitated myself on being free from an unnatural being like her, who had caused the destruction of my child; I promised myself the horrible satisfaction of witnessing the mortal agonies of the wretch who deprived my child of life. But I was baffled of my dear revenge. Another cruel punishment!" exclaimed he, starting with rage from his chair. "Yet although I knew yesterday as well as to-day that my child was dead, I did not experience such a whirlwind of despairing, self-accusing agony as now rends my soul; because I did not then recall to mind the one torturing fact that will for ever step in between me and consolation. I did not then recall the circumstance of my having seen and known my beloved child, and, moreover, discovered in her untold treasures of goodness and nobleness of character. Yet how little did I profit by her being at the farm! Merely saw her three times—yes, three times—no more! when I might have beheld her each day—nay, have kept her ever beside me. Oh! that will be my unceasing punishment, my never-ending reproach and torture—to think I had my daughter near me, and actually sent her from me! Nor, though I felt how deserving she was of every fond care, did I even admit her into my presence but three poor distant times."

While the unhappy prince thus continued to torment himself with these and similar reflections, the door of the apartment suddenly opened and Murphy entered, looking so pale and agitated that even Rodolph could not help remarking it; and rising hastily, he exclaimed,—

"For heaven's sake, Murphy, what has happened to you?"

"Nothing, my lord."

"Yet you are pale!"

"'T is with astonishment."

"Astonishment at what?"

"Madame d'Harville."

"Madame d'Harville! Gracious heaven! some fresh misfortune?"

"No, no, my lord—indeed, nothing unfortunate has occurred. Pray compose yourself! She is—in the drawing-room——"

"Here—in my house? Madame d'Harville here?—impossible!"

"My lord, I told you the surprise had quite overpowered me!"

"Tell me what has induced her to take such a step! Speak, I conjure you! In heaven's name, explain the reason for her acting so contrary to her usually rigid notions!"

"Indeed, my lord, I know nothing. But I cannot even account to myself for the strange feelings that come over me."

"You are concealing something from me!"

"No, indeed, my lord; on the honour of a man, I know only what the marquise said to me."

"And what did she say?"

"'Sir Walter,' said she, with an unsteady voice, though her countenance shone with joy, 'no doubt you are surprised at my presence here; but there are some circumstances so imperative as to leave no time to consider the strict rules of etiquette. Beg of his royal highness to grant me an immediate interview of a few minutes only in your presence, for I know well that the prince has not a better friend than yourself. I might certainly have requested him to call on me, but that would have caused at least an hour's delay; and when the prince has learned the occasion of my coming, I am sure he will feel grateful to me for not delaying the interview I seek for a single instant.' And as she uttered these words, her countenance wore an expression that made me tremble all over."

"But," returned Rodolph, in an agitated tone, and, spite of all his attempts at retaining his composure, being even paler than Murphy himself, "I cannot guess what caused your emotion; there must be something beyond those words of Madame d'Harville's to occasion it."

"I pledge you my honour if there be I am wholly ignorant of it; but I confess those few words from Madame la Marquise seemed quite to bewilder me. But even you, my lord, are paler than you were."

"Am I?" said Rodolph, supporting himself on the back of his chair, for he felt his knees tremble under him.

"Nay, but, my lord, you are quite as much overcome as I was. What ails you?"

"Though I die in making the effort," exclaimed the prince, "it shall be done. Beg of Madame d'Harville to do me the honour to walk in."

By a singular and sympathetic feeling this extraordinary and wholly unexpected visit of Madame d'Harville had awakened in the breasts of Murphy and Rodolph the same vague and groundless hope, but so senseless did it seem, that neither was willing to confess it to the other.

* * * * * *

Madame d'Harville, conducted by Murphy, entered the apartment in which was the prince.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

Ignorant of Fleur-de-Marie's being the prince's daughter, Madame d'Harville, in the fulness of her delight at restoring to him his *protégée*, had not reckoned upon its being necessary to observe any particular precaution in presenting her young companion, whom she merely left in the carriage until she had ascertained whether Rodolph chose to make known his real name and rank to the object of his bounty, and to receive her at his own house; but perceiving the deep alteration in his features, and struck with the visible gloom which overspread them, as well as the marks of recent tears so evident in his sunken eye, Clémence became alarmed with the idea that some fresh misfortune, greater than the loss of La Goualeuse would be considered, had suddenly occurred. Wholly losing sight, therefore, of the original cause of her visit, she anxiously exclaimed,—

"For heaven's sake, my lord, what has happened?"

"Do you not know, madame? Then all hope is at an end! Alas! your earnest manner, the interview so unexpectedly sought by you, all made me believe ——"

"Let me entreat of you not to think for a moment of the cause of my visit; but, in the name of that parent whose life you have preserved, I

adjure you to explain to me the cause of the deep affliction in which I find you plunged. Your paleness, your dejection, terrify me. Oh! be generous, my lord, and relieve the cruel anxiety I suffer!"

"Wherefore should I burden your kind heart with the relation of woes that admit of no relief?"

"Your words, your hesitation, but increase my apprehensions. Oh! my lord, I beseech you tell me all! Sir Walter, will you not take pity on my fears? For the love of heaven explain the meaning of all this! What has befallen the prince?"

"Nay," interrupted Rodolph, in a voice that vainly struggled for firmness, "since you desire it, madame, learn that since I acquainted you with the death of Fleur-de-Marie, I have learned she was my own daughter."

"Your daughter!" exclaimed Clémence, in a tone impossible to describe; "Fleur-de-Marie your daughter!"

"And when just now you desired to see me, to communicate tidings that would fill me with joy—pardon and pity the weakness of a parent half distracted at the loss of his newly-found treasure!—I ventured to hope—But no—no—I see too plainly I was mistaken! Forgive me, my brain seems wandering, and I scarce know what I say or do."

And then sinking under the failure of this last fond imagination of his heart, and unable longer to struggle with his black despair, Rodolph threw himself back in his chair and covered his face with his hands, while Madame d'Harville, astonished at what she had just heard, remained motionless and silent, scarcely able to breathe amid the conflicting emotions which took possession of her mind; at one instant glowing with delight at the thoughts of the joy she had it in her power to impart, then trembling for the consequences her explanation might produce on the over-excited mind of the prince. Both these reflections were, however, swallowed up in the enthusiastic gratitude which she felt in the consideration that to her had been deputed the happiness not only of announcing to the grief-stricken father that his child still lived, but that the unspeakable rapture of placing that daughter in her parent's arms was likewise vouchsafed to her. Carried away by a burst of pious thankfulness, and wholly forgetting the presence of Rodolph and Murphy, Madame d'Harville threw herself on her knees, and clasping her hands, exclaimed, in a tone of fervent piety and ineffable gratitude,—

"Thanks, thanks, my God, for this exceeding goodness! Ever blessed be Thy gracious name for having permitted me to be the happy bearer of such joyful tidings—to wipe away a father's tears by telling him his child lives to reward his tenderness!"

Although these words, pronounced with the sincerest fervour and holy ecstasy, were uttered almost in a whisper, yet they reached the listening ears of Rodolph and his faithful squire; and as Clémence rose from her knees, the prince gazed on her lovely countenance, irradiated as it was with celestial happiness and beaming with more than earthly beauty, with an expression almost amounting to adoration. Supporting herself with one hand, while with the other she sought to still the rapid beating of her heart, Madame d'Harville replied by a sweet smile and an affirmative inclination of the head to the eager, soul-searching look of Rodolph, a look wholly beyond our poor powers to describe.

"And where is she?" exclaimed the prince, trembling like a leaf.

"In my carriage."

But for the intervention of Murphy, who threw himself before Rodolph with the quickness of lightning, the latter would have rushed to the vehicle.

"Would you kill her, my lord?" exclaimed the squire, forcibly retaining the prince.

"She was merely pronounced convalescent yesterday," added Clémence; "therefore, as you value her safety, do not venture to try the poor girl's strength too far."

"You are right," said Rodolph, scarcely able to restrain himself sufficiently to follow this prudent advice, "you are quite right. Yes, I will be calm—I will not see her at present; I will wait until her first emotions have subsided. Oh! 'tis too much to endure in so short a space of time!" Then addressing Madame d'Harville, he said, in an agitated tone, while he extended to her his hand, "I feel that I am pardoned, and that you are the angel of forgiveness who brings me the glad tidings of my remission."

"Nay, my lord, we do but mutually requite our several obligations. You preserved to me my father, and Heaven permits me to restore your daughter at a time you bewailed her as lost. But I, too, must beg to be excused; for the weakness which resists all my endeavours to control it, the sudden and unexpected news you have communicated to me has quite overcome me; and I confess I should not have sufficient command over myself to go in quest of Fleur-de-Marie—my emotion would terrify her."

"And by what means was she preserved?" exclaimed Rodolph; "and whose hand snatched her from death? I am most ungrateful not to have put these questions to you earlier."

"She was rescued from drowning by a courageous female, who snatched her from a watery grave just as she was sinking."

"Do you know who this female was?"

"I do; and to-morrow she will be at my house."

"The debt is immense!" rejoined the prince; "but I will endeavour to repay it."

"Heaven must have inspired me with the idea of leaving Fleur-de-Marie in the carriage," said the marquise. "Had I brought her in with me the shock must have killed her."

"Now then," said the prince, who had been for some minutes occupied in endeavouring to subdue his extreme agitation, "I can promise you, my kind friends, that I have my feelings sufficiently under control to venture to meet my—my—*daughter*. Go, Murphy, and fetch her to my longing arms."

Rodolph pronounced the word *daughter* with a tenderness of voice and manner impossible to describe.

"Are you quite sure you are equal to the trying scene, my lord?" inquired Clémence; "for we must run no risks with one in Fleur-de-Marie's delicate state."

"Oh! yes—yes! be under no alarm! I am too well aware of the dangerous consequences any undue emotion would occasion my child; be assured I will not expose her to any thing of the sort. But go—go—my good Murphy; I beseech you hasten to bring her hither."

"Don't be alarmed, madame," said the squire, who had attentively scrutinised the countenance of the prince; "she may come now without danger. I am quite sure that his royal highness will sufficiently command himself."

"Then go—go—my faithful friend; you are keeping me in torments."

"Just give me one minute, my lord," said the excellent creature, drying the moisture from his eyes; "I must not let the poor thing see I have been crying. There, there—that will do! I should not like to cross the antechamber looking like a weeping Magdalen." So saying, the squire proceeded towards the door, but suddenly turning back, he said, "But, my lord, what am I to say to her?"

"Yes, what had he better say?" inquired the prince of Clémence.

"That M. Rodolph wishes to see her—nothing more."

"Oh! to be sure! How stupid of me not to think of that! M. Rodolph wishes to see her—capital! excellent!" repeated the squire, who evidently partook of Madame d'Harville's nervousness, and sought to defer the moment of his embassy by one little pretext and the other. "That will not give her the least suspicion, not the shadow of a notion what she is wanted for. Nothing better could have been suggested."

But still Murphy stirred not.

"Sir Walter," said Clémence, smiling, "you are afraid!"

"Well, I won't deny it!" said the squire. "And, spite of my standing six feet high, I feel and know I am trembling like a child."

"Then take care, my good fellow!" said Rodolph. "You had better wait a little longer if you do not feel quite sure of yourself."

"No, no, my lord; I have got the upper hand of my fears this time!" replied Murphy, pressing his two herculean fists to his eyes. "I know very well that at my time of life it is ridiculous for me to shew such weakness! I'm going, my lord—don't you be uneasy!" So saying, Murphy left the room with a firm step and composed countenance.

A momentary silence followed his departure, and then, for the first time, Clémence remembered she was alone with the prince, and under his roof. Rodolph drew near to her, and said, with an almost timid voice and manner,—

"If I select this day—this hour—to divulge to you the dearest secret of my heart, it is that the solemnity of the present moment may give greater weight to that I would impart, and persuade you to believe me sincere, when I assure you I have loved you almost from the hour I first beheld you. While obstacles stood in the way of my love I studiously concealed it; but you are now free to hear me declare my affection, and to ask you to become a mother to the daughter you restore to me."

"My lord," cried Madame d'Harville, "what words are these?"

"Oh! refuse me not," said Rodolph, tenderly; "let this day decide the happiness of my future life."

Clémence had also nourished a deep and sincere passion for the prince; and his open, manly avowal of a similar feeling towards herself, made under such peculiar circumstances, transported her with joy, and she could but falter out in a hesitating voice,—

"My lord, 't is for me to remind you of the difference of our stations, and the interests of your sovereignty."

"Permit me first to consider the interest of my own heart, and that of my beloved child. Oh! make us both happy by consenting to be mine! So that I who, but a short time since, owned no blessed tie, may now proudly indulge in the idea of having both a wife and daughter; and give to the sorrowing child who is just restored to my arms the delight of saying, 'My father—my mother—my sister!'—for your sweet girl would become mine also."

"Ah! my lord," exclaimed Clémence, "my grateful tears alone can speak my sense of such noble conduct!" Then suddenly checking herself, she added, "I hear persons approaching, my lord; "your daughter comes."

"Refuse me not, I conjure you!" responded Rodolph, in an agitated and suppliant tone. "By the love I bear you, I beseech you to make me happy by saying, '*Our* daughter comes!'"

"Then be it *our* daughter, if such is your sincere wish," murmured

Clémence, as Murphy, throwing open the door, introduced Fleur-de-Marie into the salon.

The astonished girl had upon entering the immense hôtel from the spacious portico under which she alighted from the marquise's carriage, first crossed an anteroom filled with servants dressed in rich liveries; then a waiting-room, in which were other domestics belonging to the establishment also wearing the magnificent livery of the house of Gerolstein; and lastly, the apartment in which the chamberlain and aides-du-camp of the prince attended his orders. The surprise and wonder of the poor Goualeuse, whose ideas of splendour were based on the recollection of the farm at Bouqueval, as she traversed those princely chambers glittering with gold, silver, paintings, and mirrors, may easily be imagined. Directly she appeared, Madame d'Harville ran towards her, kindly took her hand, and throwing her arm around her waist, as though to support her, led her towards Rodolph, who remained supporting himself by leaning one arm on the chimneypiece, wholly incapable of advancing a single step. Having consigned Fleur-de-Marie to the care of Madame d'Harville, Murphy hastily retreated behind one of the large window curtains, not feeling too sure of his own self-command. At the sight of him who was, in the eyes of Fleur-de-Marie, not only her benefactor but the worshipped idol of her heart, the poor girl, whose delicate frame had been so severely tried by illness, became seized with a universal trembling.

"Compose yourself, my child!" said Madame d'Harville. "See! there is your kind M. Rodolph, who has been extremely uneasy on your account, and is most anxious to see you."

"Oh, yes—uneasy, indeed!" stammered forth Rodolph, whose breast was wrung with anguish at the sight of his child's pale, suffering looks, and, spite of his previous resolution, the prince found himself compelled to turn away his head to conceal his deep emotion.

"My poor child!" said Madame d'Harville, striving to divert the attention of Fleur-de-Marie, "you are still very weak!" and leading her to a large gilded arm-chair, she made her sit down, while the astonished Goualeuse seemed almost to shrink from touching the elegant cushions with which it was lined. But she did not recover herself; on the contrary, she seemed oppressed. She strove to speak, but her voice failed her, and her heart reproached her with not having said one word to her venerated benefactor of the deep gratitude which filled her whole soul. At length, at a sign from Madame d'Harville, who, leaning over Fleur-de-Marie, held one of the poor girl's thin, wasted hands in hers, the prince gently approached the side of the chair, and now, more collected, he said to Fleur-de-Marie, as she turned her sweet face to welcome him,—

"At last, my child, your friends have recovered you, and be sure it is not their intention ever to part with you again. One thing you must endeavour to do, and that is to banish for ever from your mind all your past sufferings."

"Yes, my dear girl," said Clémence, "you can in no way so effectually prove your affection for your friends as by forgetting the past."

"Ah, M. Rodolph, and you, too, madame, pray believe that if, spite of myself, my thoughts do revert to the past, it will be but to remind me that but for you that wretched past would still be my lot."

"But we shall take pains to prevent such mournful reminiscences ever crossing your mind. Our tenderness will not allow you time to look back, my dear Marie," said Rodolph; "you know I gave you that name at the farm."

"Oh, yes, M. Rodolph, I well remember you did. And Madame

Georges, who was so good as even to permit me to call her mother, is she quite well?"

"Perfectly so, my child; but I have some most important news for you. Since I last saw you some great discoveries have been made respecting your birth. We have found out who were your parents, and your father is known to us."

The voice of Rodolph trembled so much while pronouncing these words that Fleur-de-Marie, herself deeply affected, turned quickly towards him, but, fortunately, he managed to conceal his countenance from her. A somewhat ridiculous occurrence also served at this instant to call off the attention of the Gonaleuse from too closely observing the prince's emotion—the worthy squire, who still remained behind the curtain, feigning to be very busily occupied in gazing upon the garden belonging to the hôtel, suddenly blew his nose with a twanging sound that re-echoed through the salon; for, in truth, the worthy man was crying like a child.

"Yes, my dear Marie," said Clémence, hastily, "your father is known to us—he is still living."

"My father!" cried La Gonaleuse, in a tone of tender delight, that subjected the firmness of Rodolph to another difficult test.

"And some day," continued Clémence—"perhaps very shortly, you will see him. But what will, no doubt, greatly astonish you, is that he is of high rank and noble birth."

"And my mother, shall I not see her, too, madame?"

"That is a question your father will answer, my dear child. But tell me, shall you not be delighted to see him?"

"Oh yes, madame," answered Fleur-de-Marie, casting down her eyes.

"How much you will love him when you know him!" said Clémence.

"A new existence will commence for you from that very day, will it not, Marie?" asked the prince.

"Oh no, M. Rodolph," replied Fleur-de-Marie, artlessly; "my new existence began when you took pity on me, and sent me to the farm."

"But your father loves you fondly—dearly!" said the prince.

"I know nothing of my father, M. Rodolph; but to you I owe every thing in this world and the next."

"Then you love me better, perhaps, than you would your father?"

"Oh, M. Rodolph, I revere and bless you with all my heart! for you have been a saviour and preserver to me both of body and soul," replied La Goualeuse, with a degree of fervour and enthusiasm that overcame her natural diffidence. "When this kind lady was so good as to visit me in prison, I said to her, as I did to every one else, 'Oh, if you have any trouble, only let M. Rodolph know it, and he will be sure to relieve you.' And when I saw any person hesitating between good and evil, I used to advise them to try and be virtuous, telling them M. Rodolph always found a way to punish the wicked. And to such as were far gone in sin, I said, 'Take care, M. Rodolph will recompense you as you deserve.' And even when I thought myself dying, I felt comfort in persuading myself that God would pity and pardon me, since M. Rodolph had deigned to do so."

Carried away by her intense feelings of gratitude and reverence for her benefactor, Fleur-de-Marie broke through her habitual timidity; while thus expressing herself a bright flush coloured her pale cheeks, while her soft blue eyes, raised towards heaven as though in earnest prayer, shone with unusual brilliancy.

A silence of some seconds succeeded to this burst of enthusiasm, while the spectators of the scene were too deeply affected to attempt a reply.

"It seems, then, my dear child," said Rodolph, at length, "that I have almost usurped your parent's place in your affections?"

"Indeed, M. Rodolph, I cannot help it! Perhaps it is very wrong in me to prefer you as I do, but I know you, and my father is a stranger to me." Then letting her head fall on her bosom, she added, in a low, confused manner, "And besides, M. Rodolph, though you are acquainted with the past, you have loaded me with kindness; while my father is ignorant of—of—my shame,—and may, probably, regret when he does know, having found an unfortunate creature like myself. And then, too," continued the poor girl, with a shudder, "madame tells me he is of high birth; how, then, can he look upon me without shame and aversion?"

"Shame!" exclaimed Rodolph, drawing himself up with proud dignity; "no, no, my poor child, your grateful, happy father will raise you to a position so great, so brilliant, that the richest and highest in the land shall behold you with respect. Despise and blush for you!—never! You shall take your place among the first princesses of Europe, and prove yourself worthy of the blood of queens which flows in your veins."

"My lord! my lord!" cried Clémence and Murphy at the same

time, equally alarmed at the excited manner of Rodolph, and the increasing paleness of Fleur-de-Marie, who gazed on her father in silent amazement.

"Ashamed of you!" continued he; "oh, if ever I rejoiced in my princely rank it is now that it affords me the means of raising you from the depths to which the wickedness of others consigned you. Yes, my child!—my long-lost, idolised child!—in me behold your father!" And utterly unable longer to repress his feelings, the prince threw himself at the feet of Fleur-de-Marie, and covered her hand with tears and caresses.

"Thanks, my God!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, passionately clasping her hands, "for permitting me to indulge that love for my benefactor with which my heart was filled. My father! oh, blessed title, that enables me to love him even as I——" And unable to bear up against the suddenness of the disclosure, Fleur-de-Marie fell fainting in the prince's arms.

Murphy rushed to the waiting-room, and shouted vehemently,—

"Send for Doctor David directly!—directly, do you hear? for his royal highness,—no—no, for some one who is suddenly taken ill here."

"Wretch that I am!" exclaimed Rodolph, sobbing almost hysterically at his daughter's feet, "I have killed her! Marie! my child, look up! it is your father calls you! Forgive—oh! forgive my precipitancy—my want of caution in disclosing to you this happy news! She is dead! God of heaven! have I then but found her to see her torn from me for ever?"

"Calm yourself, my lord," said Clémence, "there is no danger, depend upon it. The colour returns to her cheeks: the surprise overcame her."

"But so recently risen from a bed of sickness that surprise may kill her! Unhappy man that I am, doomed for ever to misery and suffering!"

At this moment the negro doctor, David, entered the room in great haste, holding in one hand a small case filled with phials, and in the other a paper he handed to Murphy.

"David," exclaimed Rodolph, "my child is dying! I once saved your life, repay me now by saving that of my daughter."

Although amazed at hearing the prince speak thus David hurried to Fleur-de-Marie, whom Madame d'Harville was supporting in her arms, examined her pulse and the veins of her temples, then turning towards Rodolph, who in speechless agony was awaiting his decree, he said,—

"Your royal highness has no cause for alarm; there is no danger."

"Can it be true? Are you quite sure she will recover?"

"Perfectly so, my lord: a few drops of ether administered in a glass of water is all that is requisite to restore consciousness."

"Thanks! thanks! my good, my excellent David!" cried the prince, in an ecstasy of joy. Then addressing Clémence, Rodolph added, "Our daughter will be spared to us."

Murphy had just glanced over the paper given him by David, suddenly he started, and gazed with looks of terror at the prince.

"Yes, my old and faithful friend," cried Rodolph, misinterpreting the expression of Murphy's features, "ere long my daughter will enjoy the happiness of calling the Marquise d'Harville mother."

"Yesterday's news," said Murphy, trembling violently, "were false."

"What say you?"

"The report of the death of the Countess Macgregor, my lord, is unfounded; her ladyship had undergone a severe crisis of her illness, and had fallen into a state of insensibility, which was mistaken by those around her for death itself, and from hence originated the account of her having expired; but to-day hopes are entertained of her ultimate recovery."

"Merciful heavens! can this be possible?" exclaimed the prince, filled with sudden alarm; while Clémence, who understood nothing of all this, looked on with undisguised astonishment.

"My lord," said David, still occupied with Fleur-de-Marie, "there is no need of the slightest apprehension respecting this young lady, but it is absolutely necessary she should be in the open air; this chair might be easily rolled out on the terrace, by opening the door leading to the garden: she would then immediately recover consciousness."

Murphy instantly ran to open the glass-door, which led to a broad terrace, then, aided by David, he gently rolled the arm-chair on to it.

"Alas!" cried Rodolph, as soon as Murphy and David were at a distance, "you have yet to learn that the Countess Sarah is the mother of Fleur-de-Marie; and I believed her dead."

A few moments of profound silence followed: Madame d'Harville became deadly pale, while an icy coldness seemed to chill her heart.

"Let me briefly explain," continued Rodolph, in extreme agitation, mingled with bitter sarcasm, "that this ambitious and selfish woman, caring for nothing but my rank and title, contrived, during my extreme youth, to draw me into a secret marriage, which was afterwards annulled. Being desirous of contracting a second marriage, the countess occasioned all the misfortunes of her unhappy child, by abandoning her to the care of mercenary and unprincipled people."

"Now I can account for the repugnance you manifested towards her."

"And you may likewise understand why she so bitterly pursued you, and had twice so nearly effected your destruction by her infamous slanders. Still a prey to her insatiate ambition, she hoped, by separating me from any other attachment, to draw me a second time within her snares. ——And this heartless woman still exists."

"Nay, nay, my lord, that tone of bitter regret is not worthy of you, any more than the feeling which dictated it."

"You do not know the wretchedness she has already caused me; and even now that I had dared to dream of happiness, and looked forward to obtaining in you the comfort and solace of my life, as well as a mother for my newly-recovered child, this woman again crosses my path, and, like the spirit of evil, dashes the cup from my lips ere it is tasted."

"Come, come, my lord," said poor Clémence, striving to look cheerful, though her tears flowed fast, spite of all her efforts to restrain them, "take courage, you have a great and holy duty to perform. But just now, when impelled by a natural burst of paternal affection, you said that the future destiny of your daughter should be happy and prosperous as her past life had been the reverse, that you would elevate her in the eyes of the world even more than she had been sunken and depressed,—to do this you must legitimise her birth, and the only means by which that can be achieved is by espousing the Countess Macgregor."

"Never! never! that would be to reward the perjury, selfishness, and unbridled ambition of the unnatural mother of my poor child. But Marie shall not suffer by my resolution. I will publicly acknowledge her, you will kindly take her under your protection, and, I venture to hope, afford her a truly maternal shelter."

"No, my lord, you will not act thus! you will not permit the cloud of doubt or mystery to hang over the birth of your daughter. The Countess Sarah is descended from an ancient and noble family, such an alliance is, certainly, disproportionate for you, but still is an honourable one; it will effectually legitimise your daughter, and whatever may be her future destiny, she will have cause to boast of her father, and openly declare who was her mother."

"But think not I can or will resign you! it were easier to lay down my life than surrender the blessed hope of dividing my time and affection between two beings I so dearly love as yourself and my daughter."

"Your child will still remain to you, my lord. Providence has mi-

raculously restored her to you, it would be sore ingratitude on your part to deem your happiness incomplete."

"You could not argue thus if you loved as I love."

"I will not undeceive you, great as is your error; on the contrary, I would have you persist in that belief, it will make the task I recommend less painful to you."

"But if you really loved me—if you suffered as bitterly and severely as I do at the thoughts of my marrying another, you would be wretched as I am. What will console you for our separation?"

"My lord, I shall try to find solace in the discharge of my charitable duties—duties I first learned to love and practise from your counsels and suggestions, and which have already afforded me so much consolation and sweet occupation."

"Hear me, I beseech you—since you tell me it is right, I will marry this woman; but the sacrifice once accomplished, think not I will remain a single hour with her, or suffer her to behold my child; thus Fleur-de-Marie will lose in you the best and tenderest of mothers."

"But she will still retain the best and tenderest of fathers. By your marriage with the Countess Sarah she will be the legitimate daughter of one of Europe's sovereign princes, and, as you but just now observed, my lord, her position will be as great and splendid as it has been miserable and obscure."

"You are then pitilessly determined to shut out all hope from me? Unhappy being that I am!"

"Dare you style yourself unhappy?—you so good, so just, so elevated in rank, as well as in mind and feeling?—who so well and nobly understand the duty of self-denial and self-sacrifice? When but a short time since you bewailed your child's death with such heart-felt agony, had any one said to you, 'Utter the dearest wish of your soul and it shall be accomplished,' you would have cried, 'My child!—my daughter!—restore her to me in life and health!' This unexpected blessing is granted you—your daughter is given to your longing arms, and yet you style yourself miserable! Ah, my lord! let not Fleur-de-Marie hear you, I beseech you!"

"You are right," said Rodolph, after a long silence, "such happiness as I aspired to would have been too much for this world, and far beyond my right even to dream of. Be satisfied your words have prevailed—I will act according to my duty to my daughter, and forget the bleeding wound it inflicts on my own heart. But I am not sorry I hesitated in my resolution, since I owe to it a fresh proof of the perfection of your character."

"And is it not to you I owe the power of struggling with personal feelings and devoting myself to the good of others?—was it not you who raised and comforted my poor depressed mind, and encouraged me to look for comfort where only it could be found? To you, then, be all the merit of the little virtue I may now be practising, as well as all the good I may hereafter achieve. But take courage, my lord, bear up, as becomes one of your firm, right-minded nature. Directly Fleur-de-Marie is equal to the journey, remove her to Germany; once there, she will benefit so greatly by the grave tranquillity of the country that her mind

and feelings will be soothed and calmed down to a placidity and gentle enjoyment of the present, while the past will seem but as a troubled dream."

"But you?—you?"

"Ah, I may now confess with joy and pride that my love for you will be, as it were, a shield of defence from all snares and temptations—a guardian angel that will preserve me from all that could assail me in body or mind. Then I shall write to you daily. Pardon me this weakness, 'tis the only one I shall allow myself; you, my lord, will also write to me occasionally, if but to give me intelligence of her whom once, at least, I called my daughter," said Clémence, melting into tears at the thoughts of all she was giving up, "and who will ever be fondly cherished in my heart as such; and when advancing years shall permit me fearlessly and openly to avow the regard which binds us to each other, then, my lord, I vow by your daughter, that, if you desire it, I will establish myself in Germany, in the same city you yourself inhabit, never again to quit you, but so to end a life which might have been passed more agreeably, as far as our earthly feelings were concerned, but which shall, at least, have been spent in the practice of every noble and virtuous feeling."

"My lord," exclaimed Murphy, entering with eagerness, "she whom Heaven has restored to you has regained her senses. Her first word upon recovering consciousness was to call for you. 'My father!—my beloved father!' she cried, 'oh, do not take me from him!' Come to her, my lord, she is all impatience again to behold you!"

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A few minutes after this Madame d'Harville quitted the prince's hôtel, while the latter repaired in all haste to the house of the Countess Macgregor, accompanied by Murphy, Baron de Graün, and an aide-de-camp.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE MARRIAGE.

From the moment in which she had learnt from Rodolph the violent death of Fleur-de-Marie, Sarah had felt crushed and borne down by a disclosure so fatal to all her ambitious hopes. Tortured equally by a too late repentance, she had fallen into a fearful nervous attack, attended

even by delirium; her partially healed wound opened afresh, and a long continuation of fainting-fits gave rise to the supposition of her death. Yet still the natural strength of her constitution sustained her even amid this severe shock, and life seemed to struggle vigorously against death.

Seated in an easy-chair, the better to relieve herself from the sense of suffocation which oppressed her, Sarah had remained for some time plunged in bitter reflections, almost amounting to regrets, that she had been permitted to escape from almost certain death.

Suddenly the door of the invalid's chamber opened, and Thomas Seyton entered, evidently struggling to restrain some powerful emotion. Hastily waving his hand for the Countess's attendants to retire, he approached his sister, who seemed scarcely to perceive her brother's presence.

"How are you now?" inquired he.

"Much the same; I feel very weak, and have at times a most painful sensation of being suffocated. Why was I not permitted to quit this world during my late attack?"

"Sarah," replied Thomas Seyton, after a momentary silence, "you are hovering between life and death—any violent emotion might destroy you, or recall your feeble powers and restore you to health."

"There can be no further trial for me, brother!"

"You know not that——"

"I could now even hear that Rodolph were dead without a shock. The pale spectre of my murdered child—murdered through my instrumentality, is ever before me. It creates not mere emotion, but a bitter and ceaseless remorse. Oh, brother! I have known the feelings of a mother only since I have become childless."

"I own I liked better to find in you that cold, calculating ambition, that made you regard your daughter but as a means of realising the dream of your whole existence."

"That ambition fell to the ground, crushed for ever beneath the overwhelming force of the prince's reproaches. And the picture drawn by him of the horrors to which my child had been exposed awakened in my breast all a mother's tenderness."

"And how," said Seyton, hesitatingly, and laying deep emphasis on each word he uttered, "if by a miracle, a chance, an almost impossibility, your daughter were still living, tell me how you would support such a discovery."

"I should expire of shame and despair!"

"No such thing! you would be but too delighted at the triumph such a circumstance would afford to your ambition; for had your daughter survived, the prince would, beyond a doubt, have married you."

"And admitting the miracle you speak of could happen, I should have no right to live; but so soon as the prince had bestowed on me the title of his consort, my duty would have been to deliver him from an unworthy spouse, and my daughter from an unnatural mother."

The perplexity of Thomas Seyton momentarily increased. Commissioned by Rodolph, who was waiting in an adjoining room, to acquaint Sarah that Fleur-de-Marie still lived, he knew not how to proceed. So feeble was the state of the countess's health, that an instant might extinguish the faint spark that still animated her frame; and he saw that any delay in performing the nuptial rite between herself and the prince might be fatal to every hope. Determined to legitimise the birth of Fleur-de-Marie by giving every necessary formality to the ceremony,

the prince had brought with him a clergyman to perform the sacred service, and two witnesses, in the persons of Murphy and Baron de Graün. The Duc de Lucenay and Lord Douglas, hastily summoned by Seyton, had arrived to act as attesting witnesses on the part of the countess.

Each moment became important, but the remorse of Sarah, mingled as it was with a maternal tenderness that had entirely replaced the fiery ambition that once held sway in her breast, rendered the task of Seyton still more difficult. He could but hope that his sister deceived either herself or him, and that her pride and vanity would rekindle in all their former brightness at the prospect of the crown so long and ardently coveted.

"Sister," resumed Seyton, in a grave and solemn voice, "I am placed in a situation of cruel perplexity. I could utter one word, of such deep importance that it might save your life or stretch you a corpse at my feet!"

"I have already told you nothing in this world can move me more."

"Yes, one—one event, my sister."

"And what is that?"

"Your daughter's welfare."

"I have no longer a child—she is dead!"

"But if she were not?"

"Cease, brother, such useless suppositions—we exhausted that subject some minutes since. Leave me to my unavailing regrets!"

"Nay, but I cannot so easily persuade myself that if, by some almost incredible chance, some unhoped-for aid, your daughter had been snatched from death, and still lived ——"

"I beseech you talk not thus to me—you know not what I suffer."

"Then listen to me, sister, while I declare, that as the Almighty shall judge you and pardon me, your daughter lives!"

"Lives! said you?—my child lives?"

"I did, and truly so; the prince, with a clergyman and the necessary witnesses, awaits in the adjoining chamber; I have summoned two of our friends to act as our witnesses. The desire of your life is at length accomplished, the prediction fulfilled, and you are wedded to royalty!"

As Thomas Seyton slowly uttered the concluding part of his speech, he observed, with indescribable uneasiness, the want of all expression in his sister's countenance, the marble features remained calm and imperturbable, and her only sign of attending to her brother's words was a sudden pressure of both hands to her heart, as if to still its throbbing, or as though under the influence of some acute pain, while a stifled cry escaped her trembling lips as she fell back in her chair. But the feeling, whatever it was, soon passed away, and Sarah became fixed, rigid, and tranquil, as before.

"Sister!" cried Seyton, "what ails you?—shall I call for assistance?"

"'Tis nothing!—merely the result of surprise and joy at the unhoped-for tidings you have communicated to me. At last, then, the dearest wish of my heart is accomplished!"

"I was not mistaken," thought Seyton, "ambition still reigns paramount in her heart, and will carry her in safety through this trial. Well, sister," said he, aloud, "what did I tell you?"

"You were right," replied she, with a bitter smile, as she penetrated the workings of her brother's thoughts, "ambition has again stifled the voice of maternal tenderness within me!"

"You will live long and happily to cherish and delight in your daughter."

"Doubtless I shall, brother! See how calm I am!"

"Ah, but is your tranquillity real or assumed?"

"Feeble and exhausted, can you imagine it possible for me to feign?"

"You can now understand the difficulty I felt in breaking this news to you?"

"Nay, I marvel at it, knowing as you did the extent of my ambition. Where is the prince?"

"He is here."

"I would fain see and speak with him before the ceremony." Then, with affected indifference, she added, "And my daughter is also here, as a matter of course?"

"She is not here at present—you will see her by and by."

"True—there is no hurry; but send for the prince, I entreat of you."

"Sister, I know not why, but your manner alarms me, and there is a strangeness in your very looks as well as words!"

And Seyton spoke truly. The very absence of all emotion in Sarah inspired him with a vague and indefinable uneasiness; he even fancied he saw her eyes filled with tears she hastily repressed. But unable to account for his own suspicions, he at once quitted the chamber.

"Now then," said Sarah, "if I may but see and embrace my daughter, I shall be satisfied. I fear there will be considerable difficulty in obtaining that happiness; Rodolph will refuse me, as a punishment for the past. But I must and will accomplish my longing desire! Oh, yes! I cannot—will not be denied! But the prince comes!"

Rodolph entered, and carefully closed the door after him. Addressing Sarah in a cold, constrained manner, he said,—

"I presume your brother has told you all?"

"He has!"

"And your ambition is satisfied?"

"Quite—quite satisfied."

"Every needful preparation for our marriage has been made; the minister and attesting witnesses are in the next room."

"I know it."

"They may enter, may they not, madam?"

"One word, my lord. I wish to see my daughter."

"That is impossible!"

"I repeat, my lord, that I earnestly desire to see my child."

"She is but just recovering from a severe illness, and she has undergone one violent shock to-day; the interview you ask might be fatal to her."

"Nay, my lord, she may be permitted to embrace her mother without danger to herself."

"Why should she run the risk? You are now a sovereign princess!"

"Not yet, my lord; nor do I intend to be until I have embraced my daughter!"

Rodolph gazed on the countess with unfeigned astonishment.

"Is it possible," cried he, "that you can bring yourself to defer the gratification of your pride and ambition?"

"Till I have indulged the greater gratification of a mother's feelings. Does that surprise you, my lord?"

"It does indeed!"

"And shall I see my daughter?"

"I repeat ——"

"Have a care, my lord—the moments are precious—mine are possibly numbered! As my brother said, the present trial may kill or cure me. I am now struggling, with all my power, with all the energy I possess, against the exhaustion occasioned by the discovery just made to me,—I demand to see my daughter, or otherwise I refuse the hand you offer me, and, if I die before the performance of the marriage ceremony, her birth can never be legitimised!"

"But Fleur-de-Marie is not here; I must send for her."

"Then do so instantly, and I consent to every thing you may propose; and as, I repeat, my minutes are probably numbered, the marriage can take place while they are conducting my child hither."

"Although 'tis a matter of surprise to hear such sentiments from you, yet they are too praiseworthy to be treated with indifference. You shall see Fleur-de-Marie; I will write to her to come directly."

"Write there—on that desk—where I received my death-blow!"

While Rodolph hastily penned a few lines, the countess wiped from her brows the cold damps that had gathered there, while her hitherto calm and unmovable features were contracted by a sudden spasmodic agony, which had increased in violence from having been so long concealed. The letter finished, Rodolph arose and said to the countess,—

"I will despatch this letter by one of my aides-du-camp; she will be

here in half-an-hour from the time my messenger departs. Shall I, upon my return to you, bring the clergyman and persons chosen to witness our marriage, that we may at once proceed?"

"You may—but no, let me beg of you to ring the bell; do not leave me by myself; let Sir Walter despatch the letter, and then return with the clergyman."

Rodolph rang; one of Sarah's attendants answered the summons.

"Request my brother to send Sir Walter Murphy here," said the countess, in a faint voice. The woman went to perform her mistress's bidding. "This marriage is a melancholy affair, Rodolph," said the countess, bitterly, "I mean as far as I am concerned; to you it will be productive of happiness." The prince started at the idea. "Nay, be not astonished at my prophesying happiness to you from such an union; but I shall not live to mar your joys."

At this moment Murphy entered.

"My good friend," said the prince, "send this letter off to my daughter, Colonel —— will be the bearer of it, and he can bring her back in my carriage; then desire the minister and all concerned in witnessing the marriage ceremony to assemble in the adjoining room."

"God of mercy!" cried Sarah, fervently clasping her hands as the squire disappeared, "grant me strength to fold my child to my heart! Let me not die ere she arrives!"

"Alas! why were you not always the tender mother you now are?"

"Thanks to you, at least, for awakening in me a sincere repentance for the past, and a hearty desire to devote myself to the good of those whose happiness I have so fearfully disturbed! Yes, when my brother told me, a short time since, of our child's preservation,—let me say our child, it will not be for long I shall require your indulgence,—I felt all the agony of knowing myself irrecoverably ill, yet overjoyed to think that the birth of our child would be legitimised; that done, I shall die happy!"

"Do not talk thus."

"You will see I shall not deceive you again; my death is certain."

"And you will die without one particle of that insatiate ambition which has been your return! By what fatality has your repentance been delayed till now?"

"Though tardy, it is sincere; and I call Heaven to witness that, at this awful moment, I bless God for removing me from this world, and that I am spared the additional misery of living, as I am aware I should have been, a weight and burden to you, as well as a bar to your happiness elsewhere. But can you pardon me? For mercy's sake, say you do! Do not delay to speak forgiveness and peace to my troubled spirit until the arrival of my child, for in her presence you would not choose to pronounce the pardon of her guilty mother; it would be to tell her a tale I would fain she never knew,—you will not refuse me the hope that, when I am gone, my memory may be dear to her?"

"Tranquillise yourself, she shall know nothing of the past."

"Rodolph, do you too say I am forgiven! Oh, forgive me—forgive me! Can you not pity a creature brought low as I am? Alas! my sufferings might well move your heart to pity and to pardon!"

"I do forgive you, from my innermost soul!" said the prince, deeply affected.

The scene was most heart-rending. Rodolph opened the folding-doors, and beckoned in the clergyman with the company assembled there, that is to say, Murphy and Baron de Graün as witnesses on the part of Rodolph, and the Duc de Lucenay and Lord Douglas on the part of the countess; Thomas Seyton followed close behind. All were impressed with the awful solemnity of the melancholy transaction, and even M. de Lucenay seemed to have lost his usual petulance and folly. The contract of marriage between the most high and powerful Prince Gustave Rodolph, fifth reigning duke of Gerolstein, and Sarah Seyton of Halsburg, countess Macgregor, which legitimised the birth of Fleur-de-Marie, had been previously drawn up by Baron de Graün, and, being read by him, was signed by the parties mentioned therein, as well as duly attested by the signature of their witnesses. Spite of the countess's repentance, when

the clergyman, in a deep solemn voice, inquired of Rodolph whether his royal highness was willing to take Sarah Seyton of Halsburg, countess Macgregor, for his wife, and the prince had replied in a firm, distinct voice, "I WILL," the dying eyes of Sarah shone with unearthly brilliancy, an expression of haughty triumph passed over her livid features,—the last flash of expiring ambition. Not a word was spoken by any of the spectators of this mournful ceremony, at the conclusion of which the four witnesses, bowing with deep but silent respect to the prince, quitted the room.

"Brother," said Sarah, in a low voice, "request the clergyman to accompany you to the adjoining room, and to have the goodness to wait there a moment."

"How are you now, my dear sister?" asked Seyton. "You look very pale."

"Nay," replied she, with a haggard smile, "fear not for me; am I not Grand Duchess of Gerolstein?" Left alone with Rodolph, Sarah murmured in a feeble and expiring voice, while her features underwent a frightful change, "I am dying; my powers are exhausted! I shall not live to kiss and bless my child!"

"Yes, yes, you will. Calm yourself; she will soon be here."

"It will not be! In vain I struggle against the approach of Death. I feel too surely his icy hand upon me; my sight grows dim; I can scarcely discern even you."

"Sarah!" cried the prince, chafing her damp, cold hands with his, "take courage, she will soon be here; she cannot delay much longer!"

"The Almighty has not deemed me worthy of so great a consolation as the presence of my child!"

"Hark, Sarah! methinks I hear the sound of wheels. Yes, 'tis she —your daughter comes!"

"Promise me, Rodolph, she shall never know the unnatural conduct of her wretched but repentant mother," murmured the countess, in almost inarticulate accents.

The sound of a carriage rolling over the paved court was distinctly heard, but the countess had already ceased to recognise what was passing around her, her words became more indistinct and incoherent. Rodolph bent over her with anxious looks; he saw the rising films of death veil those beautiful eyes, and the exquisite features grow sharp and rigid beneath the touch of the king of terrors.

"Forgive me!—my child!—let me—see—my—child!—pardon—at least!—and—after—death—the honours—due—to my—rank——" she faintly said, and these were the last articulate words she uttered,—the one, fixed, dominant passion of her life mingled, even in her last moments, with the sincere repentance she expressed and, doubtless, felt. Just at that awful moment Murphy entered.

"My lord," cried he, "the Princess Marie is arrived!"

"Let her not enter this sad apartment. Desire Seyton to bring the clergyman hither." Then pointing to Sarah, who was slowly sinking into her last moments, Rodolph added, "Heaven has refused her the gratification of seeing her child!"

Shortly after that the Countess Sarah Macgregor breathed her last.

CHAPTER LVIII.

BICETRE.

A FORTNIGHT had elapsed since Sarah's death, and it was mid-Lent Sunday. This date established, we will conduct the reader to Bicêtre, an immense building, which, though originally designed for the reception of insane persons, is equally adapted as an asylum for seven or eight hundred

poor old men, who are admitted into this species of civil invalid hospital when they have reached the age of seventy years, or are afflicted with severe infirmities. The entrance to Bicêtre is by a large court, planted with high trees, and covered in the centre by a mossy turf, intersected with

flower-beds duly cultivated. Nothing can be imagined more healthful, calm, or cheerful, than the promenade thus devoted to the indigent old beings we have before alluded to. Around this square are the spacious and airy dormitories, containing clean, comfortable beds; these chambers form the first floor of the building, and immediately beneath them are the neatly-kept and admirably-arranged refectories, where the assembled community of Bicêtre partake of their common meal, excellent and abundant in its kind, and served with a care and attention that reflects the highest praise on the directors of this fine institution. In conclusion of this short notice of Bicêtre, we will just add that at the period at which we write the building also served as the abode of condemned criminals, who there awaited the period of their execution.

It was in one of the cells belonging to the prison that the widow Martial and Calabash were left to count the hours till the following day, on which they were to suffer the extreme penalty of the law. Nicolas, the Skeleton, and several of the same description of ruffians, had contrived to escape from La Force the very night previous to the day on which they

were to have been transferred to Bicêtre. Eleven o'clock had just struck as two fiacres drew up before the outer gate; from the first of which descended Madame Georges, Germain, and Rigolette, and from the second Louise Morel and her mother. Germain and Rigolette had now been married for some fifteen days. We must leave the reader to imagine the glow of happiness that irradiated the fair face of the grisette, whose rosy lips parted but to smile, or to lavish fond words upon Madame Georges, whom she took every occasion of calling "her dear mother." The countenance of Germain expresssed a more calm and settled delight. With

his sincere affection for the merry-hearted being to whom he was united, was mingled a deep and grateful sense of the kind and disinterested conduct of Rigolette towards him when in prison; although the charming girl herself seemed to have completely forgotten all about it, and even when Germain spoke of those days she would entreat him to change the subject, upon the plea of finding all such recollections so very dull and dispiriting. Neither would the pretty grisette substitute a bonnet for the smart little cap worn before her marriage, and certainly never was humility and avoidance of pretension better rewarded: for nothing could have been invented more becoming to the piquant style of Rigolette's beauty than the simple cap, *à la paysanne*, trimmed with a large orange-coloured rosette at each side, contrasting so tastefully with the long tresses of her rich dark hair, now worn in long hanging curls; for, as she said, "she could now allow herself to take a little pains with her appearance." The fair bride wore a handsome worked muslin collar, while a scarf, of similar colour to the trimmings of her cap, half-concealed her graceful, pliant figure, which, notwithstanding her having leisure to adorn herself, was still unfettered by the artificial restraints of stays; although the tight grey silk dress she wore fitted without a fold or a crease over her lightly-rounded bosom, resembling the beautiful statue of Galatea in marble. Madame Georges beheld the happiness of the newly-married pair with a delight almost equal to their own. As for Louise Morel she had been set at liberty after undergoing a most searching investigation, and when a *post-mortem* examination of her infant had proved that it had come to its death by natural means; but the countenance of the poor victim of another's villany had lost all the freshness of youth, and bore the impress of deep sorrow, now softened and subdued by gentleness and resignation. Thanks to Rodolph, and the excellent care that had been taken of her through his means, the mother of Louise, who accompanied her, had entirely recovered her health. Madame Georges having informed the porter at the lodge that she had called by the desire of one of the medical officers of the establishment, who had appointed to meet herself and the friends by whom she was accompanied at half-past eleven o'clock, she was requested to choose whether she would await the doctor within doors or in the large square before the building; determining to do the latter, and supporting herself on the arm of her son, while the wife of Morel walked beside her, she sauntered along the shady alleys that bordered this delightful spot, Louise and Rigolette following them.

"How very glad I am to see you again, dear Louise!" said the bride. "When we came to fetch you on our arrival from Bouquevale, I wanted to run up-stairs to you, but *my husband* would not let me; he said I should tire myself, so I stayed in the coach, and that is the reason why we meet now for the first time since——"

"You so kindly came to console me in prison, Mademoiselle Rigolette," cried Louise, deeply affected. "You are so feeling for all in trouble, whether of body or mind!"

"In the first place, my dear Louise," replied the grisette, hastily interrupting praises that were to her oppressive, "I am not Mademoiselle Rigolette any longer, but *Madame Germain*. I do not know whether you heard——"

"That you were married? oh, yes I did. But pray let me thank you as you deserve."

"Ah, but Louise," persisted *Madame Germain*, "I am quite sure you have not learnt all the particulars; how my marriage is all owing to the generosity of him who was at once the protector and benefactor of yourself and family, Germain, his mother, and my own self."

"Ah, yes, M. Rodolph,—we bless his name morning and evening. When I came out of prison the lawyer who had been to see me from time

to time, by M. Rodolph's order, told me that, thanks to the same kind friend who had already interested himself so much for us, M. Ferrand (and here at the very mention of the name an involuntary shudder passed over the poor girl's frame) had settled an annuity on my poor father and myself—some little reparation for the wrongs he had done us. You are aware that my poor dear father is still confined here, though still improving in health."

"And I also know that the kind doctor who has appointed our being here to-day, even hopes your dear parent may be enabled to return with

you to Paris; he thinks that it will be better to take some decided steps to throw off his malady, and that the unexpected presence of persons your father was in the daily habit of seeing may produce the most favourable effects—perhaps cure him; and that is what I think will be the case."

"Ah, mademoiselle, I dare not hope for so much happiness."

"*Madame Germain*—my dear Louise—if it is all the same to you—but to go on with what I was telling you, you have no idea, I am sure, who M. Rodolph really is?"

"Yes I have,—the friend and protector of all who are unhappy."

"True, but that is not all. Well, as I see you really *are* ignorant of many things concerning our benefactor, I will tell you all about it."

Then addressing her husband, who was walking before her with Madame Georges, she said, "Don't walk so very fast, Germain, you will tire our mother!" And, with a look of proud satisfaction, she said, turning to Louise, "Does not he deserve to have a good wife? See how attentive he is to his mother! He certainly is very handsome, too! —a thousand times more so than that Cabrion, or M. Girandeau, the travelling clerk! You remember him, don't you, Louise? Talking of Cabrion puts me in mind to ask you whether M. Pipelet and his wife have arrived yet? The doctor wished them to come here to-day with us, because your father has talked much about them during his wanderings."

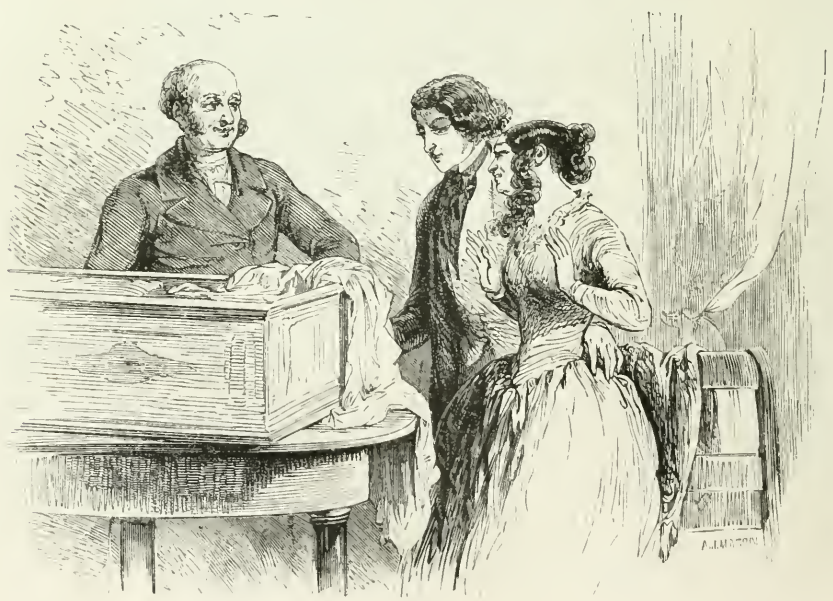
"No, they are not here at present, but they will not be long. When we called for them they had already set out."

"And then as for being punctual in keeping an appointment, M. Pipelet is as exact as a clock to the hour and minute! But let me tell you a little more about my marriage and M. Rodolph. Only think, Louise, it was he who sent me with the order for Germain's liberation! You can imagine our delight at quitting that horrid prison. Well, we went home to my room, and there Germain and I together prepared a nice little bit of dinner; but, bless you! we might just as well have spared ourselves the trouble, for, after it was ready, neither of us could eat a bit for joy. When evening came Germain left me, promising to return the next day. Well, at five o'clock next morning, I got up and sat down to my work, for I was terribly behindhand with it. As eight o'clock struck some one knocked at the door; who should it be but M. Rodolph! Directly I saw him I began to thank him from the bottom of my heart for all he had done for Germain and myself. He would not allow me to proceed. 'My kind neighbour,' said he, 'I wish you to give this letter to Germain, who will soon be here. Then you will take a *fiacre*, and proceed without delay to a small village, near Ecouen, called Bouqueval. Once there, inquire for Madame Georges; and I wish you all imaginable pleasure from your trip.' 'M. Rodolph,' I said, 'pray excuse me, but that will make me lose another day's work, and I have already got two to make up for.' 'Make yourself perfectly easy, my pretty neighbour,' said he, 'you will find plenty of work at Madame Georges, I promise you; she will prove an excellent customer, I have no doubt, and I have particularly recommended you to her.' 'Oh, that alters the case, M. Rodolph, then I'm sure I shall be but too glad to go.' 'Adieu, neighbour,' said M. Rodolph. 'Good-by,' cried I, 'and many thanks for so kindly recommending me.' When Germain

came, I told him all about it; so as we were quite sure M. Rodolph would not send us upon any foolish errand, we set off as blithe as birds. Only imagine, Louise, what a surprise awaited us on our arrival! I declare I can scarcely think of it without tears of happiness coming into my eyes. We went to the very Madame Georges you see walking before us, and who should she turn out to be but the mother of Germain!"

"His mother?"

"Yes, his own very mother, from whom he had been taken when quite a baby! You must try to fancy their mutual joy! Well, when Madame Georges had wept over her son, and embraced and gazed at him a hundred times, my turn came to be noticed. No doubt M. Rodolph had written something very favourable about me, for, clasping me in her arms, she said, 'She was acquainted with my conduct towards her son.' 'Then, mother,' interposed Germain, 'it only rests with you to ask her, and Rigolette will be your child as well as I.' 'And I do ask her to be my daughter with all my heart,' replied his mother, 'for you will never find a better or a prettier creature to love as your wife.' So there I was quite at home, in such a sweet farm, along with Germain, his mother, and my birds; for I had taken the poor, little, dear things with me, just to hear how delightedly they would sing when they found themselves in the country. The days passed like a dream. I did only just what I liked—helped Madame Georges, walked about with Germain, and danced and sung like a wild thing. Well, our marriage was fixed to take place on yesterday fortnight; the evening before, who should arrive but a tall, bald-headed, elderly gentleman, who looked so kind; and he brought me a *corbeille de mariage* from M. Rodolph. Only think, Louise, what a beauty it must have been!—made like a large rosewood box, with these



words written in letters of gold, on medallion of blue china,—'*Industry and Prudence—Love and Happiness.*' And what do you suppose this charming box contained? Why, a number of lace caps similar to the one I have now on, pieces for gowns, gloves, ornaments, a beautiful shawl, and this pretty scarf. Oh, I thought I should lose my senses with delight! But that is not all. At the bottom of the box I found a handsome pocket-book, with these words written on a bit of paper affixed to it,—'*From a friend to a friend.*' Inside were two folded papers, one addressed to Germain, and the other to me. In that addressed to Germain was an order for his appointment as director of a bank for the poor with a salary of four thousand francs a-year; while he found under the envelope, directed to me, a money-order for forty thousand francs on the treasury—yes, that's the word—it was called my marriage-portion. I did not like to take so large a sum, but Madame Georges said to me, 'My dear child, you both can and must accept it, as a recompense for your prudence, industry, and devotion to those who were in misfortune; for did you not run the risk of injuring your health, and probably deprive yourself of your only means of support, by sitting up all night at work, in order to make up for the time you spent in attending to others?'"

"Oh, that is quite true," exclaimed Louise, with fervour; "I do not think there is any one upon earth would have done all that you have done, Mademoi—— Madame Germain!"

"There's a good girl, she has learned her lesson at last! Well, I said to the elderly gentleman that I did not merit such a reward, that what little I had done was purely because it afforded me pleasure. To which he answered, 'That makes no difference; M. Rodolph is immensely rich, and he sends you this dowry as a mark of his friendship and esteem, and your refusal of it would pain him very much indeed; he will himself be present at your marriage, and then he will compel you to take it.'"

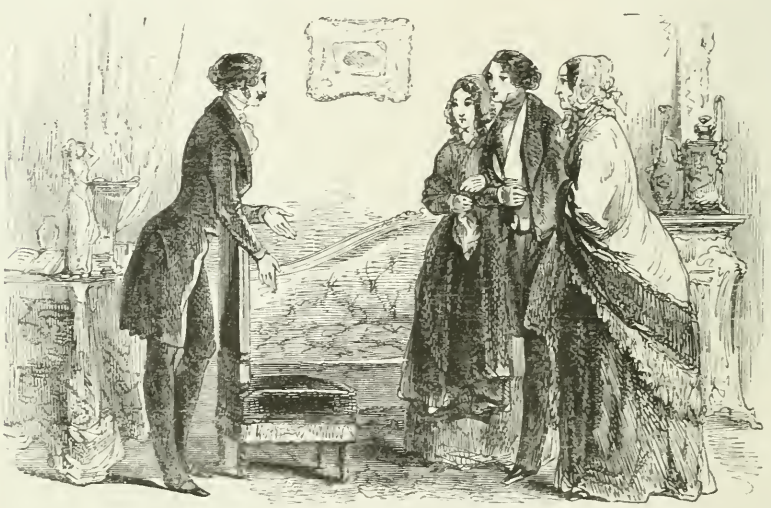
"What a blessing that so charitable a person as M. Rodolph should be possessed of such riches!"

"Of course it is! But I haven't told you all yet. Oh, Louise, you never can guess who and what M. Rodolph turns out to be; and to think of my making him carry large parcels for me! But have a little patience—you will hear about it directly. The night before the marriage the elderly gentleman came again very late, and in great haste—it was to tell us that M. Rodolph was ill, and could not attend the wedding, but that his friend, the bald-headed gentleman, would take his place. And then only, my dear Louise, did we learn that our benefactor was—guess what—a prince! A prince, do I say?—bless you, ever so much higher than that! A royal highness!—a reigning duke!—a sort of a second-rate king! Germain explained all about his rank to me!"

"M. Rodolph a prince!—a duke!—almost a king!"

"Just think of that, Louise!—and imagine my having asked him to help me to clean my room! A pretty state of confusion it threw me into when I recollected all that, and how free I had spoken to him! So of course you know when I found that he was as good as a king, I did not dare refuse his gracious wedding present. Well, my dear, when

we had been married about a week, M. Rodolph sent us word that he should be glad if Germain, his mother, and myself, would pay him a wedding visit; so we did. I can tell you my heart beat as though it would come through my side! Well, we stopped at a fine palace in the Rue Plumet, and were ushered into a number of splendid apartments, filled with servants in liveries, all covered with gold lace, gentlemen in black, with silver chains round their necks and swords by their sides, officers in rich uniforms, and all sorts of gay-looking people; the rooms we passed through were all gilt, and filled with such beautiful things they quite dazzled my eyesight only to look at them. At last we got to the apartment where the bald-headed old gentleman was sitting, with a quantity of grand folks, all covered with gold lace and embroidery; well, when our elderly friend saw us, he rose and conducted us to an adjoining room, where we found M. Rodolph—I mean the prince—dressed so simply, and looking so good and kind—just like the M. Rodolph we first knew—



that I did not feel at all frightened at the recollection of how I had set him to pin my shawl for me, mend my pens, and walked with him arm-in-arm in the street, just like two equals, as, certainly, *then* I thought we were."

"Oh, I should have trembled like a leaf if I had been you!"

"Well, I did not mind it at all, he smiled so encouragingly; and after kindly welcoming Madame Georges, he held out his hand to Germain, and then said smilingly to me, 'Well, neighbour, and how are 'Papa Crétu' and 'Ramonette?' (those were the names I called my birds by. Was it not kind of him to recollect them?) 'I feel quite sure,' added he, 'that yourself and Germain can sing as merry songs as your birds.' 'Yes, indeed, my lord,' replied I (Madame Georges had taught me as we came along how I was to address the prince), 'we are as happy as it is

possible to be, and our happiness is the greater because we owe it to you.' 'Nay, nay, my good child,' said he, 'you may thank your own excellent qualities and that of Germain for the felicity you enjoy,' &c. I need not go on with that part of the story, Louise, because it would oblige me to repeat all the charming praises I received; and, certainly, I cannot recollect ever doing more than my strict duty, though the prince was pleased to think differently. Well, we all came away more sorrowful than we went, for we found it was to be our farewell visit to our benefactor, he being about to return to Germany. Whether or not he has gone I cannot tell you, but, absent or present, our most grateful remembrance and respectful esteem will ever attend him. I forgot to tell you that a dear, good girl I knew when we were both in prison together, had been living at the farm with Madame Georges; it seems my young friend had, fortunately, found a friend in M. Rodolph, who had placed her there. But Madame Georges particularly cautioned me not to say a word on the subject to the prince, who had some reason for desiring it should not be talked about,—no doubt because he could not bear his benevolent deeds should be known. However, I learnt one thing that gave me extreme pleasure, that my sweet Goualeuse had found her parents, and that they had taken her a great, great way from Paris; I could not help feeling grieved, too, that I had not been able to wish her good-bye before she went. But forgive me, dear Louise, for being so selfish as to keep talking to you of every one's happiness when you have so much reason to be sorrowful yourself."

"Had my child but been spared to me," said poor Louise, sadly, "it would have been some consolation to me; for how can I ever hope to find any honest man who would make me his wife, although I have got money enough to tempt any one."

"For my part, Louise, I feel quite sure that one of these days I shall see you happily married to a good and worthy partner, who will pity you for your past troubles, and love and esteem you for the patience with which you endured them."

"Ah, Madame Germain, you only say so to try and comfort me; but whether you really believe what you say or no, I gratefully feel and thank you for your kindness. But who are these? I declare, Monsieur and Madame Pipelet! How very gay he looks! so different to the sad, dejected appearance he always wore, while M. Cabrion was tormenting him as he did!"

Louise was right: Pipelet advanced in high spirits, and as though treading on air; on his head he wore the well-known bell-crowned hat, a superb grass-green coat adorned his person, while a white cravat, with embroidered ends, was folded round his throat in such a manner as to permit the display of an enormous collar, reaching nearly up to his eyes, and quite concealing his cheeks. A large, loose waistcoat, of bright buff, with broad maroon-coloured stripes, black trousers, somewhat short for the wearer, snowy white stockings, and highly-polished shoes, completed his equipment. Anastasie displayed a robe of violet-coloured merino, tastefully contrasted with a dark-blue shawl. She proudly exhibited her freshly-curled Brutus wig to the gaze of all shemet, while her cap was slung on her arm by its bright green strings, after the manner of a reti-

cule. The physiognomy of Alfred—ordinarily so grave, thoughtful, and dejected—was now mirthful, jocund, and hilarious. The moment he

caught a glimpse of Rigolette and Louise, he ran towards them, exclaiming in his deep, sonorous voice, "Delivered! gone!"

"How unusually joyful you seem, M. Pipelet!" said Rigolette; "do pray tell us what has occasioned such a change in your appearance!"

"Gone! I tell you, mademoiselle—or, rather, madame—as I may, do, and ought to say, now that, like my Anastasie, you are tied up for life."

"You are very polite, M. Pipelet; but please to tell me *who* has gone?"

"Cabrion!" responded M. Pipelet, inspiring and respiring the air with a look of indescribable delight, as though relieved of an enormous weight;

"he has quitted France for ever—for a perpetuity! At length he has departed, and I am myself again!"

"Are you quite sure he has gone?"

"I saw him with my eyes ascend the diligence, *en route* for Strasbourg, with all his luggage and baggage; that is to say, a hat-case, a maul-stick, and a box of colours."

"What is my old dear chattering about?" cried Anastasie, as she came puffing and panting to the spot where the little group were assembled; "I'll be bound he was giving you the history of Cabrion's going off—I'm sure he has talked of nothing else all the way we came."

"Because I'm half wild with delight; I seem to have got into another world—such a lightness has come over me. A little while ago my hat used to seem as though loaded with lead, and as if it pressed forwards in spite of me; now I seem as though borne on the breeze towards the firmament, to think that he is gone—actually set out—and never to return!"

"Yes, the blackguard is off at last!" chimed in Madame Pipelet.

"Anastasie," cried her husband, "spare the absent! happiness calls for mercy and forbearance on our parts: I will obey its dictates, and merely allow myself to remark that Cabrion was a — a — worthless scoundrel!"

"But how do you know that he has gone to Germany?" inquired Rigolette.

"By a friend of our 'king of lodgers.' Talking of that dear man, you haven't heard that, owing to the handsome manner in which he recommended us, Alfred has been appointed house-porter to a sort of charitable bank, established in our house by a worthy Christian, who wishes, like M. Rodolph, to do all the good he can?"

"Ah!" replied Rigolette, "and, perhaps, you don't know either that my dear Germain is appointed manager of this same bank?—all owing to the kind intervention of M. Rodolph."

"Well I never!" exclaimed Madame Pipelet, "all our good luck comes together; and I'm sure I'm heartily glad we shall keep old friends and acquaintances around us. I hate fresh faces, for my part. I'm certain I would not change my old duck of a husband even for your young handsome one, Madame Germain. But to go back to Cabrion. Only imagine a bald-headed, stout, elderly gentleman, coming to tell us of Alfred's new situation, and at the same time inquiring if a talented artist of the name of Cabrion did not once lodge in the house with us. Oh, my poor darling! directly Cabrion's name was mentioned down went the boot he was mending, and if I had not caught him he would have swooned away. But, fortunately, the bald gentleman added, 'This young painter has been engaged by a very wealthy person to do some work, which will occupy him for years, and he may, very probably, establish himself in another country.' In confirmation of which the old gentleman gave my Alfred the date of Cabrion's departure, with the address of the office from which he started."

"And I had the unhoped-for satisfaction of reading on the ticket, '*M. Cabrion, artist in painting, departs for Strasbourg, and further, by the company's diligence.*' The hour named was for this morning. I need not say I was in the innyard with my wife."

"And there we saw the rascal take his seat on the box beside the driver."

"Just as the vehicle was set in motion Cabrion perceived me, turned round, and cried '*Yours for ever! I go to return no more.*' Thank heaven!

the loud blast of the guard's horn nearly drowned these familiar and insulting words, as well as any others he might have intended to utter. But I pity and forgive the wretched man—I can afford to be generous, for I am delivered from the bane and misery of my life."

"Depend upon it, M. Pipelet," said Rigolette, endeavouring to restrain a loud fit of laughter,—"depend upon it, you will see him no more. But listen to me, and I will tell you something I am sure you are ignorant of, and which it will be almost difficult for you to credit. What do you think of our M. Rodolph not being what we took him for, but a prince in disguise—a royal highness!"

"Go along with you!" cried Anastasie, "that is a joke!"

"Oh, but really," said Rigolette, "I am not joking; it is as true as—as—that I am married to my dear Germain."

"Goodness gracious me!" exclaimed Anastasie; "my king of lodgers a royal highness! Oh, dear, here's a pretty go! and I asked him to mind the lodge for me. Oh, pardon! pardon! pardon!" and then, carried away by the excess of her reverence and regret for having so undervalued a prince, though a disguised one, Madame Pipelet placed her cap on her head, as though she imagined herself in the presence of royalty. Alfred, on the contrary, manifested his respect for royalty in a manner diametrically the reverse of the form adopted by his wife. Snatching off his hat, that hat which had never before been seen to quit his head, he commenced bowing to empty space, as though standing in presence of the august personage he apostrophised, while he exclaimed, "Have I, then, been honoured by a visit from royalty? has my poor lodge been so far

favoured? And to think of his illustrious eyes having seen me in my bed, when driven thither by the vile conduct of Cabrion!"

At this moment Madame Georges, turning round, cried out,—

"My children, the doctor comes."

Doctor Herbin, the individual alluded to, was a man of about the middle age, with a countenance expressive of great kindness and benevolence, united to extreme skill and penetration in discovering the extent of malady with which his unfortunate patients were affected. His voice, naturally harmonious, assumed a tone of gentle suavity when he spoke to the poor lunatics; who, however bereft of reason, seemed always to listen with peculiar delight to his soft, soothing words, which frequently had the effect of subduing the invariable irritability attendant on this fearful complaint. M. Herbin had been among the first to substitute, in his treatment of madness, sympathy and commiseration for the frightful remedies ordinarily employed. He abandoned the coercive system, so repugnant to every principle of humanity, for kind words, conciliating looks, and a ready attention to every request that could reasonably be granted. He banished chains, whips, drenching with cold water, and even *solitary confinement*, except in cases of urgent necessity.

"Monsieur," said Madame Georges, addressing the doctor, "I have ventured hither with my son and daughter, although personally unknown to M. Morel; but my interest in his unfortunate state made me desirous of witnessing the experiment you are about to make to restore his reason. You have every hope of succeeding, have you not?"

"I certainly reckon much, madame, on the good effects likely to be produced by the sight of his daughter, and the persons he has been in the constant habit of seeing."

"When my husband was arrested," said Morel's wife, pointing to Rigolette, "our kind young friend here was nursing me and my children."

"And my father knew M. Germain quite well," said Louise; then directing the attention of M. Herbin to Alfred and Anastasie, she added, "Monsieur and madame here were porters at the house, and assisted our family to the utmost of their ability."

"I am greatly obliged to you, my worthy friend," said the doctor, addressing Alfred, "for quitting your occupation to come hither; but I see by your amiable countenance that you have cheerfully sacrificed your time to visit your poor lodger here."

"*Sirr!*" replied Pipelet, gravely bowing, "men should help each other in this sublunary world, and remember that all are brothers; added to which your unfortunate patient was the very cream and essence of an honest man, and therefore do I respect him."

"If you are not afraid, madame," said Doctor Herbin to Madame Georges, "of the sight of the poor creatures here, we will cross some of the yards leading to that part of the building where I have deemed it advisable to remove Morel, instead of allowing him to accompany the others to the farm as usual."

"The farm!" exclaimed Madame Georges. "Have you a farm here?"

"Your surprise is perfectly natural, madame. Yes, we have a farm, the produce of which is most serviceable to the establishment, although entirely worked by the patients."

"Is it possible? Can you make these lunatics work, and allow them to be at liberty while they do so?"

"Certainly: exercise, the calm tranquillity of the fields, with the aspect of nature, are among our most certain means of cure. Only one keeper goes with them, and we have rarely had an instance of any patient endeavouring to get away; they are delighted to be employed, and the trifling reward they gain serves still to improve their condition, by enabling them to purchase different little indulgences. But we have reached the gate conducting to one of these courts." Then perceiving a slight appearance of alarm on the countenance of Madame Georges, the doctor added, "Lay aside all apprehension, madame; in a very few minutes you will feel as tranquil as I do myself."

"I follow you, sir. Come, my children."

"Anastasie," whispered Pipelet, "when I think, that had the persecutions of that odious Cabrion continued, your poor dear Alfred might have become mad, like the unhappy wretches we are about to behold, clad in the most wild and singular state, chained up by the middle, or confined in dens like the wild beasts in the 'Jardin des Plantes——'"

"Oh, bless your dear old heart, don't talk of such a thing! La! I've heard say that them as has gone mad for love, are for all the world like born devils directly they see a woman; dashing against the bars of their dens, and making all sorts of horrid noises, till the keepers are forced to flog them till they drop, or else turn great taps of water on their heads before they can quiet them."

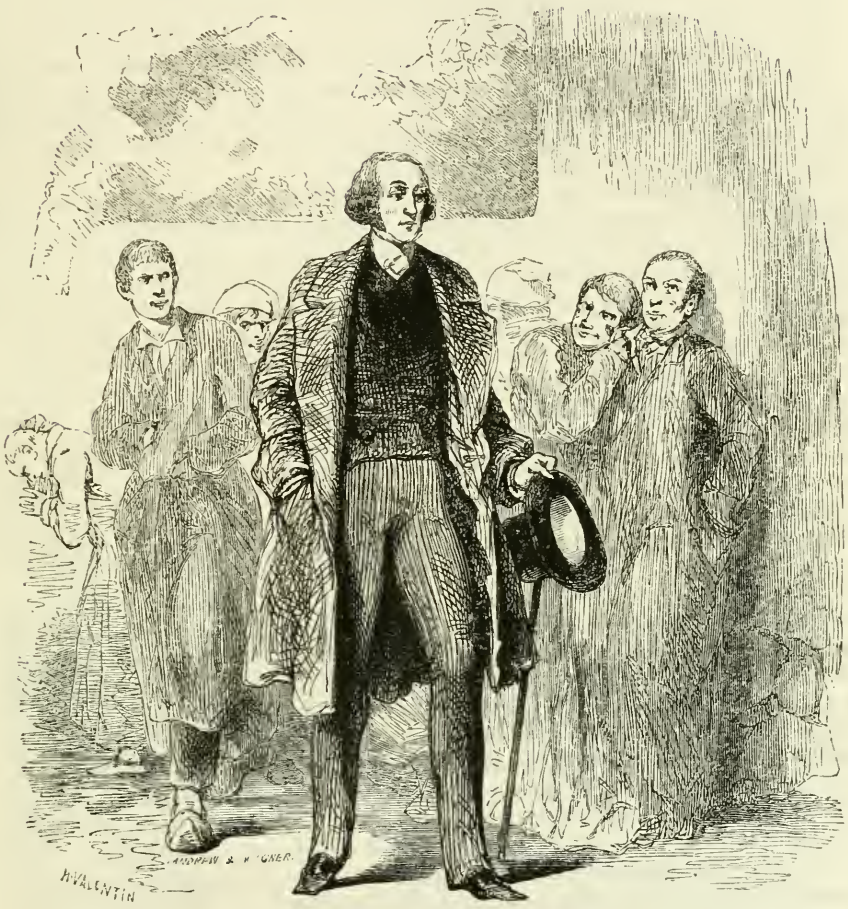
"Anastasie," rejoined Pipelet, gravely, "I desire you will not go too close to these dreadful creatures, an accident so soon happens."

"Besides," answered Anastasie, with a tone of sentimental melancholy, "poor things, I have no business to shew myself just for the sake of tantalising them. 'Tis woman's beauty and fascination reduces them to this horrid state. I declare I feel a cold shudder creep over me as I reflect that, perhaps, if I had refused to make you a happy man, Alfred, you might at this very minute be raving mad for love, and shut up in one of these dens, roaring out the moment you caught sight of a woman; while as it is, my poor old duck is glad to get out of the way of the naughty females that will be trying to make him notice them."

"'Tis true, my modesty is easily alarmed. But, Anastasie, the door opens, I tremble with dread of what we are about to witness; no doubt the most hideous looking people, and all sorts of dreadful noises, rattling of chains, and grinding of teeth."

The door being opened admitted them into a long courtyard, planted with rows of trees, under which benches were placed. On each side was a well-constructed and spacious portico, or covered stone terrace, with which a range of large, airy cells communicated. A number of men, all alike clad in a grey dress, were walking, talking, or conversing in this pleasant retreat, while others were seated on the benches, enjoying the refreshing shade and fresh open air. At the sight of Doctor Herbin a number of the unfortunate lunatics pressed around him, with every manifestation of joy and delight, extending to him their hands with an expression of grateful confidence, to which he cordially responded, by saying,—

"Good day—good day, my worthy fellows! I am glad to see you all so well and happy."



Doctor Herbin.

Some of the poor lunatics, too far from the doctor to be able to seize his hand, ventured, with a sort of timid hesitation, to offer theirs to the persons who were with him.

"Good morning, friends," said Germain, shaking hands in a manner so cordial as to fill the unfortunate beings with happiness.

"Are these the mad patients?" inquired Madame Georges.

"Nearly the worst belonging to the establishment," answered the doctor, smiling; "they are permitted to be together during the day, but at night they are locked up in the cells you see there."

"Can it be possible that these men are really mad! But when are they violent?"

"Generally at the first outbreak of their malady, when they are brought here. After a short time, the soothing treatment they experience, with the society of their companions, calms and amuses them, so that their paroxysms become milder and less frequent, until at length, by the blessing of God, they recover their senses."

"What are those individuals talking so earnestly about?" inquired Madame Georges; "one of them seems referring to a blind man, who, in addition to the loss of sight, seems likewise deprived of speech and reason. Have you such a one among your patients, or is the existence of this person but a mere coinage of the brain?"

"Unhappily, madame, it is a fact but too true, and the history connected with it is a most singular one. The blind man concerning whom you inquire was found in a low haunt in the Champs Elysées, in which a gang of robbers and murderers of the worst description were apprehended; this wretched object was discovered, chained in the midst of an underground cave, and beside him lay stretched the dead body of a woman, so horribly mutilated that it was wholly impossible to attempt to identify it. The man himself was hideously ugly, his features being quite destroyed by the application of vitriol. He has never uttered a single word since he came hither; whether his dumbness be real or affected I know not, for, strange to say, his paroxysms always occur during the night, and when I am absent, so as to baffle all conjecture as to his real situation; but his madness seems occasioned by violent rage, the cause of which we cannot find out, for, as I before observed, he never speaks or utters an articulate sound. But here he is."

The whole of the party accompanying the doctor started with horror at the sight of the Schoolmaster, for he it was, who merely feigned being dumb and mad to procure his own safety. The dead body found beside him was that of the Chouette, whom he had murdered, not during a paroxysm of madness, but while under the influence of such a burning fever of the brain as had produced the fearful dream he had dreamed the night he passed at the farm of Bouqueval. After his apprehension in the vaults of the tavern in the Champs Elysées, the Schoolmaster had awakened from his delirium to find himself a prisoner in one of the cells of the Conciergerie, where mad persons are temporarily placed under restraint. Hearing all about him speak of him as a raving and dangerous lunatic, he resolved to continue to enact the part, and even feigned absolute dumbness for the purpose of avoiding the chance of any questions being attempted to be put to him. His scheme succeeded. When removed to Bicêtre he affected occasional fits of furious madness, taking care always to select the night for these outrageous bursts, the better to escape the vigilant eye of the head surgeon; the house-doctor, hastily summoned, never arriving in time to witness either the beginning or ending of these attacks. The few of his accomplices who knew either his name or the fact of his having escaped from the galleys at Rochefort, were ignorant what had become of him; and even if they did, what interest could they have had in denouncing him? Neither would it have been possible to establish his identity—burnt and mutilated as he was—with the daring felon of Rochefort. He hoped, therefore, by continuing to act the part of a madman, to be permitted to abide permanently at Bicêtre:

such was now the only desire of the wretch, unable longer to indulge his appetite for sinful and violent deeds. During the solitude in which he lived in Bras Rouge's cellar, remorse gradually insinuated itself into his strong heart; and, cut off from all communication with the outer world, his thoughts fled inwards, and presented him with ghastly images of those he had destroyed, till his brain burned with its own excited torture. And thus this miserable creature, still in the full vigour and strength of manhood, before whom were, doubtless, long years of life, and enjoying the undisturbed possession of his reason, was condemned to linger out the remainder of his days as a self-imposed mute, and in the company of fools and madmen; or if his imposition was discovered, his murderous deeds would conduct him to a scaffold, or condemn him to perpetual banishment among a set of villains, for whom his newly-awakened penitence made him feel the utmost horror. The Schoolmaster was sitting on a bench, a mass of grizzled, tangled locks hung around his huge and hideous head; leaning his elbow on his knee, he supported his cheek in his hand. Spite

of his sightless eyes and mutilated features, the revolting countenance still expressed the most bitter and overwhelming despair.

"Dear mother," observed Germain, "what a wretched looking object is this unfortunate blind man!"

"Oh, yes, my son!" answered Madame Georges; "it makes one's heart ache to behold a fellow-creature so heavily afflicted. I know not when any thing has so completely shocked me as the sight of this deplorable being."

Scarcely had Madame Georges given utterance to these words than the Schoolmaster started, and his countenance, even despite its cicatrized and disfigured state, became of an ashy paleness. He rose and turned his head in the direction of Madame Georges so suddenly, that she could not refrain from faintly screaming, though wholly unsuspicious of who the frightful creature really was; but the Schoolmaster's ear had readily detected the voice of his wife, and her words told him she was addressing her son.

"Mother!" inquired Germain, "what ails you? are you ill?"

"Nothing, my son; but the sudden movement made by that man terrified me. Indeed, sir," continued she, addressing the doctor, "I begin to feel sorry I allowed my curiosity to bring me hither."

"Nay, dear mother, just for once to see such a place cannot hurt you!"

"I tell you what, Germain," interposed Rigolette, "I don't feel very comfortable myself; and I promise you neither your mother nor I will desire to come here again—it is too affecting!"

"Nonsense! you are a little coward! Is she not M. le Docteur?"

"Why, really," answered M. Herbin, "I must confess that the sight of this blind lunatic affects even me, who am accustomed to such things."

"What a scarecrow, old ducky! isn't he?" whispered Anastasie; "but, la! to my eyes every man looks as hideous as this dreadful blind creature in comparison with you, and that is why no one can ever boast of my having granted him the least liberty—don't you see, Alfred?"

"I tell you what, Anastasie," replied Pipelet, "I shall dream of this frightful figure. I know he will give me an attack of nightmare. I won't eat tripe for supper till I have quite forgot him."

"And how do you find yourself now, friend?" asked the doctor of the Schoolmaster; but he asked in vain, no attempt was made to reply. "Come, come!" continued the doctor, tapping him lightly on the shoulder, "I am sure you hear what I say; try to make me a sign at least, or speak—something tells me you can if you will!"

But the only answer made to this address was by the Schoolmaster suddenly drooping his head, while from the sightless eyes rolled a tear.

"He weeps!" exclaimed the doctor.

"Poor creature!" murmured Germain, in a compassionate tone.

The Schoolmaster shuddered; again he heard the voice of his son, breathing forth commiseration for his wretched, though unknown parent.

"What is the matter?" inquired the doctor; "what is it grieves you?"

But, without taking any notice of him, the Schoolmaster hid his face with his hands.

"We shall make nothing of him!" said the doctor. Then, perceiving how painfully this scene appeared to affect Madame Georges, he added, "Now, then, madame, we will go to Morel, and, if my expectations are fulfilled, you will be amply rewarded for the pain you have felt hitherto, in witnessing the joy of so good a husband and father in being restored to his family."

With these words the doctor, followed by the party that had accompanied him, proceeded on his way, leaving the Schoolmaster a prey to his own distracting thoughts, the most bitter of which was the certainty of having heard his son's voice, and that of his wife, for the last time. Aware of the just horror with which he inspired them, the misery, shame, and affright with which they would have heard the disclosure of his name, made him prefer a thousand deaths to such a revelation. One only, but great consolation remained in the certainty of having awakened the pity of his son; and, with this thought to comfort him, the miserable being determined to endure his sufferings with repentance and submission.

"We are now about to pass by the yard appropriated to the use of the idiot patients," said the doctor, stopping before a large grated door, through which the poor idiotic beings might be seen huddled together, with every appearance of the most distressing imbecility.

Spite of Madame Georges' recent agitation, she could not refrain from casting a glance through the railing.

"Poor creatures!" said she, in a gentle, pitying voice; "how dreadful to think their sufferings are hopeless! for I presume there is no remedy for such an affliction as theirs?"

"Alas, none, madame!" replied the doctor. "But I must not allow you to dwell too long on this mournful picture of human misery. We have now arrived at the place where I expect to find Morel, whom I desired should be left entirely alone, in order to produce a more startling

effect in the little project on which I build my hopes for his restoration to reason."

"What idea principally occupies his mind?" asked Madame Georges.

"He believes that if he cannot earn thirteen hundred francs by his day's work, in order to pay off a debt contracted with one Ferrand, a notary, his daughter will perish on a scaffold."

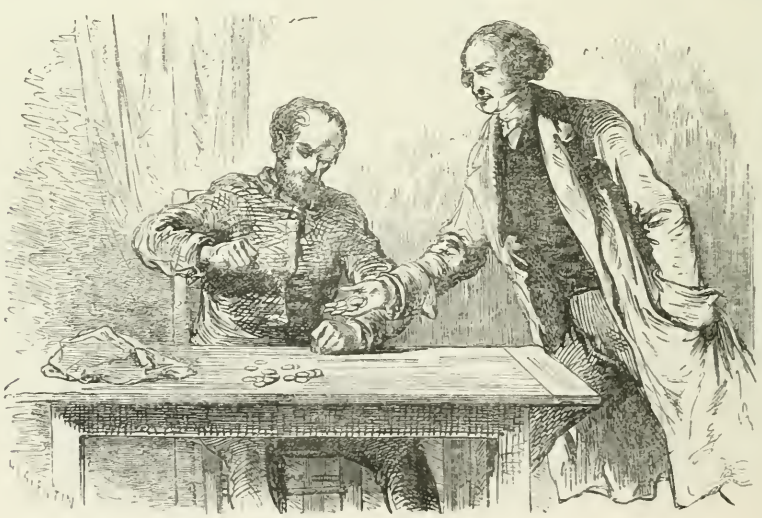
"That man Ferrand was, indeed, a monster!" exclaimed Madame Georges; "poor Louise Morel and her father were not the only victims to his villany, he has persecuted my son with the bitterest animosity."

"I have heard the whole story from Louise," replied the doctor. "Happily the wretch can no more wring your hearts with agony. But be so good as to await me here while I go to ascertain the state of Morel." Then, addressing Louise, he added, "You must carefully watch for my calling out '*Come!*' Appear instantly; but let it be alone. When I call out '*Come!*' for the second time, the rest of the party may make their appearance."

"Alas, sir, my heart begins to fail me!" replied Louise, endeavouring to suppress her tears. "My poor father! what if the present trial fail!"

"Nay, nay, keep up your courage! I am most sanguine of success in the scheme I have long meditated for the restoration of your father's reason. Now, then, all you have to do for the present is carefully to attend to my directions." So saying the doctor, quitting his party, entered a small chamber, whose grated window looked into the garden.

Thanks to rest, care, sufficiency of nourishing diet, Morel was no longer the pale, careworn, haggard creature that had entered those walls; the tinge of health began to colour his before jaundiced cheek, but a melancholy smile, a fixed motionless gaze, as though on some object for ever present to his mental view, proved too plainly that Reason had not entirely resumed her empire over him. When the doctor entered, Morel was sitting at a table, imitating the movements of a lapidary at his wheel.



"I must work," murmured he, "and hard, too. Thirteen hundred francs! — ay, thirteen hundred is the sum required, or poor Louise will be dragged to a scaffold! that must not be! No, no! her father will work—work—work! Thirteen hundred francs! Right!"

"Morel, my good fellow," said the doctor, gently advancing towards him, "don't work so very hard; there is no occasion now, you know that you have earned the thirteen hundred francs you required to free Louise. See! here they are!" and with these words the doctor laid a handful of gold on the table.

"Saved! Louise saved!" exclaimed the lapidary, catching up the money, and hurrying towards the door; "then I will carry it at once to the notary."

"Come!" called out the doctor, in considerable trepidation, for well he knew the success of his experiment depended on the manner in which the mind of the lapidary received its first shock.

Scarcely had the doctor pronounced the signal than Louise sprung forwards, and presented herself at the door just as her father reached it. Bewildered and amazed, Morel let fall the gold he clutched in his hands, and retreated in visible surprise. For some minutes he continued gazing on his daughter with a stupified and vacant stare, but by degrees his memory seemed to awaken, and, cautiously approaching her, he examined her features with a timid and restless curiosity. Poor Louise, trembling with emotion, could scarcely restrain her tears; but a sign from the doctor made her exert herself to repress any manifestation of feeling calculated to disturb the progress of her parent's thoughts. Meanwhile Morel, bending over his daughter, and peering, with uneasy scrutiny, into her countenance, became very pale, pressed his hands to his brows, and then wiped away the large damp drops that had gathered there. Drawing closer and closer to the agitated girl, he strove to speak to her, but the words expired on his lips. His paleness increased, and he gazed around him with the bewildered air of a person awakening from a troubled dream.

"Good, good!" whispered the doctor to Louise; "now, when I say 'Come!' throw yourself into his arms and call him 'father!'"

The lapidary, pressing his two hands on his breast, again commenced examining the individual before him from head to foot, as if determined to satisfy his mind as to her identity. His features expressed a painful uncertainty, and, instead of continuing to watch the features of his daughter, he seemed as if trying to hide himself from her sight, saying, in a low, murmuring, broken tone,—

"No, no! it is a dream! — where am I? It is impossible! — I dream — it cannot be she!" Then, observing the gold strewed on the floor, he cried, "And this gold! — I do not remember — am I then awake? Oh, my head is dizzy! I dare not look—I am ashamed! She is not my Louise!"

"Come!" cried the doctor, in a loud voice.

"Father! dearest father!" exclaimed Louise; "do you not know your child—your poor Louise?" And as she said these words she threw herself on the lapidary's neck, while the doctor motioned for the rest of the group to advance.

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed Morel, while Louise loaded him with caresses, "where am I?—what has happened to me?—who are all these persons? Oh, I cannot—dare not believe the reality of what I see!"

Then after a short silence, he abruptly took the head of Louise between his two hands, gazed earnestly and searchingly at her for some moments, then cried, in a voice tremulous with emotion, "Louise?"

"He is saved!" said the doctor.

"My dear Morel—my dear husband!" exclaimed the lapidary's wife, mingling her caresses with those of her daughter.

"My wife!—my child and wife both here!" cried Morel.

"Pray don't overlook the rest of your friends, M. Morel," said Rigolette, advancing; see, we have all come to visit you at once!"

"I for one am delighted to renew my acquaintance with the worthy M. Morel," said Germain, coming forward and extending his hand.

"And your old acquaintances at the lodge beg that they may not be overlooked," chimed in Anastasie, leading Alfred up to the astonished and delighted lapidary; "you know us, don't you, M. Morel?—the Pipelets—the hearty old Pipelets, and your everlasting friends! Come, pluck up courage, and look about you, M. Morel! Hang it all, Daddy Morel! here's a happy meeting!—may we see many such! *Ail-l-l-l-ez donc!*"

"M. Pipelet and his wife!—every body here! It seems to me so long since—but—but no matter—'tis you Louise, my child—'tis you, is it not?" exclaimed he, joyfully pressing his daughter in his arms.

"Oh, yes, my dearest father!—'tis your own poor Louise! And there is my mother!—here are all our kind friends! You will never quit us more—never know sorrow or care again, and henceforward we shall all be happy and prosperous!"

"Happy?—let me try and recollect a little of past things! I seem to have a faint recollection of your being taken to prison—and—and then, Louise, all seems a blank and confusion here," continued Morel, pressing his hand to his temples.

"Never mind all that, dearest father!—I am here and innocent—let that comfort and console you."

"Stay! stay!—that note of hand I gave! Ah! now I remember it all!" cried the lapidary, with shuddering horror. Then in a voice of assumed calmness, he said, "And what has become of the notary?"

"He is dead, dearest father," murmured Louise.

"Dead?—he dead?—then, indeed, I dare hope for happiness! But where am I?—how came I here?—how long have I left my home, and wherefore was I brought hither? I have no recollection of any of these things!"

"You were extremely ill," said the doctor, "and you were brought here for air and good nursing. You have had a severe fever, and been at times a little light-headed."

"Yes, yes!—I recollect now; and when I was taken ill I remember I was talking with my daughter, and some other person—who could it be? Ah, now I know!—a kind, good man, named M. Rodolph, who saved me from being arrested. Afterwards, strange to say, I cannot recall a single circumstance."

"Your illness was attended with an entire absence of memory," said the doctor.

"And in whose house am I now?"

"In that of your friend, M. Rodolph," interposed Germain, hastily; "it was thought that country air would be serviceable to you, and promote your recovery."

"Excellent!" said the doctor, in a low tone; then speaking to a keeper who stood near him, he said, "Send the coach round to the garden-gate to prevent the necessity of taking our recovered patient through the different courts, filled with those less fortunate than himself."

As frequently occurs in cases of madness, Morel had not the least idea or recollection of the aberration of intellect under which he had suffered.

Shortly afterwards, Morel, with his wife and daughter, ascended the fiacre, attended also by a surgeon of the establishment, who, for pre-

caution's sake, was charged to see him comfortably settled in his abode ere he left him; and in this order, and followed by a second carriage, conveying their friends, the lapidary quitted Bicêtre without entertaining the most remote suspicion of ever having entered it.

"And do you consider this poor man effectually cured?" asked Madame Georges of the doctor, as he led her to the coach.

"I hope so, at least; and I wished to leave him wholly to the beneficial effects of rejoining his family, from whom it would now be almost dangerous to attempt to separate him; added to which, one of my pupils will remain with him and give the necessary directions for his regimen and treatment. I shall visit him myself daily, until his cure is confirmed, for not only do I feel much interested in him, but he was most particularly recommended to me when he first came here by the chargé d'affaires of the Grand Duke of Gerolstein."

A look of intelligence was exchanged between Germain and his mother.

Much affected with all they had seen and heard, the party now took leave of the doctor, reiterating their gratification at having been present during so gratifying a scene, and their grateful acknowledgements for the politeness he had shewn them in conducting them over the establishment.

As the doctor was re-entering the house he was met by one of the superior officers of the place, who said to him,—

"Ah, my dear M. Herbin, you cannot imagine the scene I have just witnessed; it would have afforded an inexhaustible fund of reflection for so skilful an observer as yourself."

"To what do you allude?"

"You are aware that we have here two females, a mother and a daughter, who are condemned to death, and that their execution is fixed for to-morrow. Well, in my life, I never witnessed such a cool indifference as that displayed by the mother; she must be a female fiend!"

"You allude to the widow Martial, I presume; what fresh act of daring has she committed?"

"You shall hear. She had requested permission to share her daughter's cell until the final moment arrived: her wish was complied with. Her daughter, far less hardened than her parent, appeared to feel contrition as the hour of execution approached, while the diabolical assurance of the old woman seemed, if possible, to augment. Just now the venerable chaplain of the prison entered their dungeon to offer to them the consolations of religion. The daughter was about to accept them, when the mother, without for one instant losing her coolness or frigid self-possession, began to assail the chaplain with such insulting and derisive language that the venerable priest was compelled to quit the cell, after trying in vain to induce the violent and unmanageable woman to listen to one word he said. It is a fearful fact connected with this family, that a sort of depravity seems to pervade it. The father was executed, a son is now in the galleys, a second has only escaped a public and disgraceful end by flight; while the eldest son and two young children have alone been able to resist this atmosphere of moral contagion. What a singular circumstance connected with this double execution it is,

that the day of Mid-Lent should have been selected. At seven o'clock to-morrow, the hour fixed, the streets will be filled with groups of masqueraders, who having passed the night at the different balls and places of entertainment beyond the barriers, will be just returning home; added to which, at the place of execution, the Barrière Saint-Jacques, the noise of the revels still being kept up in honour of the carnival, can be distinctly heard.

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The following morning's sun rose bright and cloudless. At four o'clock in the morning various troops of soldiers surrounded the approaches to Bicêtre.

We shall now return to Calabash and her mother in their dungeon.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE TOILETTE.

The condemned cell of Bicêtre was situated at the end of a gloomy passage, into which a trifling portion of light and air was admitted by means of small gratings let into the lower part of the wall. The cell itself would have been wholly dark but for a kind of wicket, let into the upper part of the door, which opened into the corridor before mentioned.

In this wretched dungeon, whose crumbling ceiling, damp, mouldy walls, and stone-paved floor, struck a death chill like that of the grave, were confined the widow Martial, and her daughter Calabash.

The harsh, angular features of the widow stood out amidst the imperfect light of the place, cold, pale, and immovable as those of a marble

statue. Deprived of the use of her hands, which were fastened beneath her black dress by the strait-waistcoat of the prison, formed of coarse grey cloth and tightly secured behind her, she requested her cap might be taken off, complaining of an oppression and burning sensation in her head; this done, a mass of long, grizzled hair fell over her shoulders. Seated at the side of her bed, she gazed earnestly and fixedly at her daughter, who was separated from her by the width of the dungeon, and wearing like her mother the customary strait-waistcoat, was partly reclining and partly supporting herself against the wall, her head bent forwards on her breast, her eye dull and motionless, and her breathing quick and irregular. From time to time a convulsive tremor rattled her lower jaw, while her features, spite of their livid hue, remained comparatively calm and tranquil.

Within the cell, and immediately beneath the wicket of the entrance-door, was seated an old, grey-headed soldier, whose rough, sun-burnt features betokened his having felt the scorch of many climes, and borne his part in numerous campaigns. His duty was to keep constant watch over the condemned prisoners.

"How piercing cold it is here!" exclaimed Calabash; "yet my eyes burn in my head, and I have a burning, quenchless thirst!" Then addressing the bald-headed veteran, she said, "Water! pray give me a drink of water!"

The old soldier filled a cup of water from a pitcher placed near him, and held it to her lips. Eagerly swallowing the draught, she bowed her head in token of thankfulness, and the soldier proceeded to offer the same beverage to the mother.

"Would you not like to moisten your lips?" asked he, kindly.

With a rough, repulsive gesture, she intimated her disinclination, and the old man sat down again.

"What's o'clock?" inquired Calabash.

"Nearly half-past four," replied the soldier.

"Only three hours!" replied Calabash, with a sinister and gloomy smile,—"three hours more!—and then ——" She could proceed no further.

The widow shrugged up her shoulders. Her daughter divined her meaning, and said, "Ah, mother, you have so much more courage than I have—you never give way, you don't."

"Never!"

"I see it, and I know you too well to expect it. You look at this moment as calm and collected as if we were sitting sewing by our own fireside. Ah! those happy days are gone!—gone for ever!"

"Folly!—why prate thus?"

"Nay, mother, I cannot bear to rest shut up with my own wretched thoughts! It relieves my heart to talk of bygone times, when I little expected to come to this."

"Mean, cowardly creature!"

"I know I am a coward, mother—I am afraid to die!—every one cannot boast of your resolution. I do not possess it—I have tried as much as I could to imitate you—I refused to listen to the priest because you did not like it. Still I may have been wrong in sending the holy

man away; for," added the wretched creature, with a shudder, "who can tell what is *after* death? Mother, do you hear me?—*after*, I say! And it only wants ——"

"Exactly three hours, and you will know all about it!"

"How can you speak so indifferently on such a dreadful subject? Yet true enough—in three short hours, we who now sit talking to each other, who, if at liberty, should ail nothing, but be ready to enjoy life, must die! Oh, mother! can you not say one word to comfort me?"

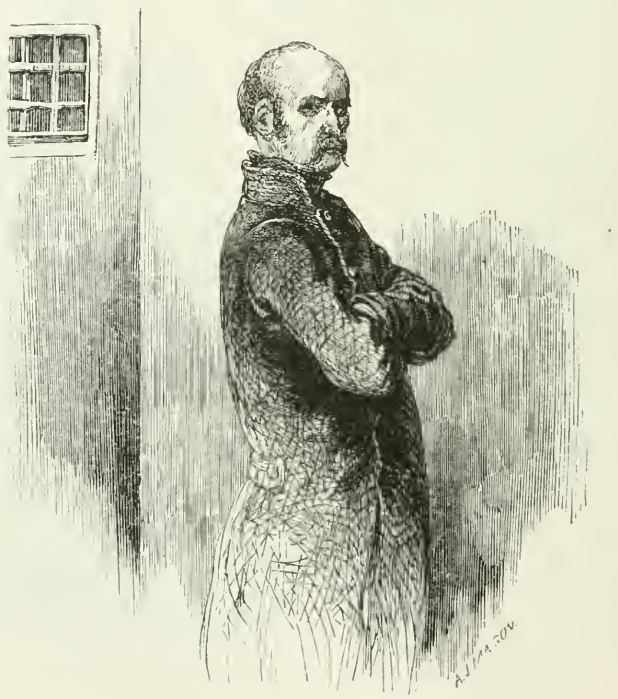
"Be bold, girl, and die as you have lived, a true Martial!"

"You should not talk thus to your daughter," interposed the old soldier, with a serious air; "you would have acted more like a parent had you allowed her to listen to the priest when he came."

Again the widow contemptuously shrugged her shoulders, and, without deigning to notice the soldier further than by bestowing on him a look of withering contempt, she repeated to Calabash,—

"Pluck up your courage, my girl, and let the world see that women have more courage than men, with their priests and cowardly nonsense!"

"General Leblond was one of the bravest officers of the regiment he



General Leblond.

belonged to. Well, this dauntless man fell at the siege of Saragossa, covered with wounds, and his last expiring act was to sign himself with the cross," said the veteran: "I served under him. I only tell you this to prove that to die with a prayer on our lips is no sign of cowardice!"

Calabash eyed the bronzed features of the speaker with deep attention. The scared and weather-beaten countenance of the old man told of a life passed in scenes of danger and of death, encountered with calm bravery. To hear those wrinkled lips urging the necessity of prayer, and associating religion with the memory of the good and valiant, made the miserable, vacillating culprit think that, after all, there could be no cowardice in recommending one's soul to the God who gave it, and breathing a repentant supplication for the past.

"Alas! alas!" cried she, "why did I not attend to what the priest had to say to me? It could not have done me any harm, and it might have given me courage to face that dreadful *afterwards*, that makes death so terrible."

"What! again?" exclaimed the widow, with bitter contempt. "'Tis a pity time does not permit of your becoming a nun! The arrival of your brother Martial will complete your conversion; but that honest man and excellent son will think it sinful to come and receive the last wishes of his dying mother!"

As the widow uttered these last words, the huge lock of the prison was heard to turn with a loud sound, and then the door to open.

"So soon!" shrieked Calabash, with a convulsive bound; "surely the time here is wrong—it cannot be the hour we were told! Oh, mother!—mother! must we die at least two hours before we expected?"

"So much the better if the executioner's watch deceives me!—it will put an end to your whining folly, which disgraces the name you bear!"

"Madame," said an officer of the prison, gently opening the door, "your son is here—will you see him?"

"Yes!" replied the widow, without even turning her head.

Martial entered the cell, the door of which was left open that those without in the corridor might be within hearing, if summoned by the old soldier, who still remained with the prisoners. Through the gloom of the corridor, lighted only by the faint beams of the early morning, and the dubious twinkling of a single lamp, several soldiers and jailors might be seen, the former standing in due military order, the latter seated on benches.

Martial looked as pale and ghastly as his mother, while his features betrayed the mental agony he suffered at witnessing so afflicting a sight. Still, spite of all it cost him, as well as the recollection of his mother's crimes and openly expressed aversion for himself, he had felt it imperatively his duty to come and receive her last commands. No sooner was he in the dungeon than the widow, fixing on him a sharp, penetrating look, said, in a tone of concentrated wrath and bitterness, with a view to rouse all the evil passions of her son's mind,—

"Well, you see what the *good* people are going to do with your mother and sister!"

"Ah, mother! how dreadful! Alas! alas! have I not warned you that such would be the end ——"

Interrupting him, while her lips became blanched with rage, the widow exclaimed,—

"Enough!—'tis sufficient that your mother and sister are about to be murdered, as your father was!"

"Merciful God!" cried Martial, "and to think that I have no power to prevent it!—'tis past all human interference! What would you have me do? Alas! had you or my sister attended to what I said, you would not now have been here."

"Oh, no doubt!" returned the widow, with her usual tone of savage irony; "to you the spectacle of mine and your sister's sufferings is a matter of delight to your proud heart; you can now tell the world without a lie that your mother is dead—you will have to blush for her no more!"

"Had I been wanting in my duty as a son," answered Martial, indignant at the unjust sarcasms of his mother, "I should not now be here."

"You came but from curiosity! Own the truth if you dare!"

"No, mother!—you desired to see me, and I obeyed your wish."

"Ah, Martial!" cried Calabash, unable longer to struggle against the agonising terror she endured, "had I but listened to your advice, instead of being led by my mother, I should not be here!" Then losing all further control of herself, she exclaimed, "'Tis all your fault, accursed mother! Your bad example and evil counsel have brought me to what I am!"

"Do you hear her?" said the widow, bursting into a fiendish laugh; "come, this will repay you for the trouble of paying us a last visit! Your excellent sister has turned pious, repents of her own sins, and curses her mother!"

Without making any reply to this unnatural speech, Martial approached Calabash, whose dying agonies seemed to have commenced, and, regarding her with deep compassion, said,—

"My poor sister! Alas! it is now too late to recall the past!"

"It is never too late to turn coward it seems!" cried the widow, with savage excitement. "Oh, what a race you are! Happily Nicolas has escaped; François and Amandine will slip through your fingers: they have already imbibed vice enough, and want and misery will finish them!"

"Oh, Martial!" groaned forth Calabash, "for the love of God, take care of those two poor children, lest they come to such an end as mother's and mine!"

"He may watch over them as much as he likes," cried the widow, with settled hatred in her looks, "vice and destitution will have greater effect than his words, and some of these days they will avenge their father, mother, and sister!"

"Your horrible expectations, mother, will never be fulfilled," replied the indignant Martial; "neither my young brother, sister, nor self, have any thing to fear from want. La Louve saved the life of the young girl Nicolas tried to drown, and the relations of the young person offered us either a large sum of money or a smaller sum and some land at Algiers; we preferred the latter, and to-morrow we quit Europe, with the children, for ever."

"Is that absolutely true?" asked the widow of Martial, in a tone of angry surprise.

"Mother, when did I ever tell you a falsehood?"

"You are doing so now to try and put me into a passion!"

"What! displeased to learn that your children are provided for?"

"Yes, to find that my young wolves are to be turned into lambs, and to hear that the blood of father, mother, and sister, have no prospect of being avenged!"

"Do not talk so—at a moment like this!"

"I have murdered, and am murdered in my turn,—the account is even, at any rate."

"Mother, mother, let me beseech you to repent ere you die!"

Again a peal of fiendish laughter burst from the pallid lips of the condemned woman.

"For thirty years," cried she, "have I lived in crime; would you have me believe that thirty years guilt is to be repented of in three days, with the mind disturbed and distracted by the near approach of death? No, no, three days cannot effect such wonders; and I tell you, when my head falls its last expression will be rage and hatred!"

"Brother, brother!" ejaculated Calabash, whose brain began to wander, "help, help! Take me from hence," moaned she in an expiring voice; "they are coming to fetch me—to kill me! Oh, hide me, dear brother, hide me, and I will love you ever more!"

"Will you hold your tongue?" cried the widow, exasperated at the weakness betrayed by her daughter. "Will you be silent? Oh, you base, you disgraceful creature! and to think that I should be obliged to call myself your parent!"

"Mother!" exclaimed Martial, nearly distracted by this horrid scene, "will you tell me why you sent for me?"

"Because I thought to give you heart and hatred; but he who has not the one cannot entertain the other. Go, coward, go!"

At this moment a loud sound of many footsteps was heard in the

corridor; the old soldier looked at his watch. A rich ray of the golden brightness, which marked the rising of that day's sun, found its way through the loopholes in the walls, and shed a flood of light into the very midst of the wretched cell, rendered now completely illumined by means of the opening of the door at the opposite end of the passage to that in which the condemned cell was situated. In the midst of this blaze of day appeared two gaolers, each bearing a chair; an officer also made his appearance, saying to the widow in a voice of sympathy,—

"Madame, the hour has arrived."

The mother arose on the instant, erect and immoveable, while Calabash uttered the most piercing cries. Then four more persons entered the cell; four of the number, who were very shabbily dressed, bore in their hands packets of fine but very strong cord. The taller man of the party was dressed in black, with a large cravat; he handed a paper to the officer. This individual was the executioner, and the paper a receipt

signifying his having received two females for the purpose of guillotining them. The man then took sole charge of these unhappy creatures, and, from that moment, was responsible for them. To the wild terror and despair which had first seized Calabash, now succeeded a kind of stupefaction; and so nearly insensible was she that the assistant executioners were compelled to seat her on her bed, and to support her when there; her firmly closed jaws scarcely enabled her to utter a sound, but her hollow eyes rolled vacantly in their sockets, her chin fell listlessly on her breast, and, but for the support of the two men, she would have fallen forwards a lifeless, senseless mass. After having bestowed a last embrace on his wretched sister, Martial stood petrified with terror, unable to speak or move, and as though perfectly spell-bound by the horrible scene before him. The cool audacity of the widow did not for an instant forsake her; with head erect, and firm collected manner, she assisted in taking off the strait waistcoat she had worn, and which had hitherto fettered her movements; this removed, she appeared in an old black stuff dress.

"Where shall I place myself?" asked she, in a clear, steady voice.

"Be good enough to sit down upon one of those chairs," said the executioner, pointing to the seats arranged at the entrance of the dungeon.

With unfaltering step, the widow prepared to follow the directions given her, but, as she passed her daughter, she said, in a voice that betokened some little emotion,—

"Kiss me, my child!"

But as the sound of her mother's voice reached her ear, Calabash seemed suddenly to wake up from her lethargy, she raised her head, and, with a wild and almost frenzied cry, exclaimed,—

"Away! leave me! and, if there be a hell, may it receive you!"

"My child," repeated the widow, "let us embrace for the last time!"

"Do not approach me!" cried the distracted girl, violently repulsing her mother; "you have been my ruin in this world and the next!"

"Then forgive me, ere I die!"

"Never—never!" exclaimed Calabash; and then, totally exhausted by the effort she had made, she sunk back in the arms of the assistants.

A cloud passed over the hitherto stern features of the widow, and a moisture was momentarily visible on her glowing eyeballs. At this instant she encountered the pitying looks of her son. After a trifling hesitation, during which she seemed to be undergoing some powerful internal conflict, she said,—

"And you?"

Sobbing violently, Martial threw himself into his mother's arms.

"Enough!" said the widow, conquering her emotion, and withdrawing herself from the close embrace of her son; "I am keeping this gentleman waiting," pointing to the executioner; then, hurrying towards a chair, she resolutely seated herself, and the gleam of maternal sensibility she had exhibited was for ever extinguished.

"Do not stay here," said the old soldier, approaching Martial with an air of kindness. "Come this way," continued he, leading him, while Martial, stupified by horror, followed him mechanically.

The almost expiring Calabash having been supported to a chair by the two assistants, one sustained her all but inanimate form, while the

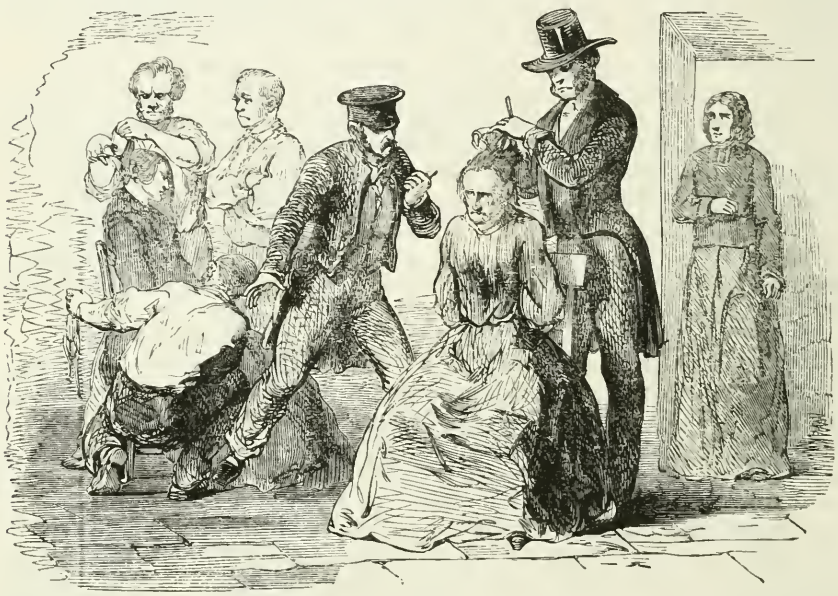
other tied her hands behind with fine but excessively strong whipcord, knotted into the most inextricable meshes, while with a cord of the same description he secured her feet, allowing her just so much liberty as would enable her to proceed slowly to her last destination. The widow having borne a similar pinioning with the most imperturbable composure, the executioner, drawing from his pocket a huge pair of scissors, said to her, with considerable civility,—

"Be good enough to stoop your head, madame."

Yielding immediate obedience to the request, the widow said,—

"We have been good customers to you; you have had my husband in your hands, and now you have his wife and daughter!"

Without making any reply, the executioner began to cut the long grey hairs of the prisoner very close, especially at the nape of the neck.



"This makes the third time in my life," continued the widow, with a dismal smile, "that I have had my head dressed by a professor;—when I took my first communion the white veil was arranged; then on my marriage, when the orange-flowers were placed there; and upon the present occasion: upon my word, I hardly know which became me most. You cannot guess what I am thinking of?" resumed the widow, addressing the executioner, after having again contemplated her daughter.

But the man made her no sort of answer, and no sound was heard but that of the scissors, and the sort of convulsive and hysterical sob that occasionally escaped from Calabash.

At this moment a venerable priest approached the governor, and addressed him in a low earnest voice, the import of which was to express his desire to make another effort to rescue the souls of the condemned.

"I was thinking that at five years old my daughter, whose head you are going to cut off, was the prettiest child I ever saw, with her fair hair and red cheeks. Who that saw her then would have said that——" She was silent for a moment, and then said, with a burst of indescribable laughter, "What a farce is destiny!"

At this moment the last of her hair was cut off.

"I have done, madame," said the executioner, politely.

"Many thanks; and I recommend my son Nicolas to you," said the widow: "you will cut off his hair some day." A turnkey came in and said a few words to her in a low tone. "No,—I have already said no!" she answered angrily.

The priest hearing these words, and seeing any further interference useless, immediately withdrew.

"Madame, we are all ready to go. Will you take any thing?" inquired the executioner, civilly.

"No, I thank you; this evening I shall take a mouthful of earth." And after this remark the widow rose firmly. Her hands were tied behind her back, and a rope was also attached to each ankle, allowing her sufficient liberty to walk. Although her step was firm and resolute, the executioner and his assistant offered to support her; but she turned to them disdainfully, and said, "Do not touch me, I have a steady eye and a firm foot, and they will hear on the scaffold whether or not I have a good voice." Calabash was carried away in a dying state.

After having traversed the long corridor, the funereal cortège ascended a stone staircase, which led to an exterior court, where was a picquet of gendarmes, a hackney coach, and a long, narrow carriage with a yellow body, drawn by three post-horses, who were neighing loudly.

"We shall not be *full inside*," said the widow, as she took her seat.

The two vehicles, preceded and followed by the picquet of gendarmes, then quitted the outer gate of Bicêtre, and went quickly towards the Boulevard Saint-Jacques.

CHAPTER LX.

MARTIAL AND THE CHOURINEUR.

Before we proceed we have a few words to say as to the acquaintance recently established between the Chourineur and Martial. When Germain had left the prison, the Chourineur proved very easily that he had robbed himself; and making a statement of his motive for

this singular mystification to the magistrate, he was set at liberty, after having been severely admonished.

Desirous of recompensing the Chourineur for this fresh act of devotion, Rodolph, in order to realise the wishes of his rough *protégé*, had lodged

him in the hôtel of the Rue Plumet, promising that he should accompany him on his return to Germany. The Chourineur's blind attachment to Rodolph was like that of a dog for his master. When, however, the prince had found his daughter, all was changed, and, in spite of his warm gratitude for the man who had saved his life, he could not make up his mind to take with him to Germany the witness of Fleur-de-Marie's fallen state; yet, determined to carry out the Chourineur's wishes, he sent for him, and told him that he had still another service to ask of him. At this the Chourineur's countenance brightened up; but he was greatly distressed when he learned that he must quit the hôtel that very day, and would not accompany the prince to Germany. It is useless to mention the munificent compensations which Rodolph offered to the Chourineur—the money he intended for him, the farm in Algeria, any thing he could desire. The Chourineur was wounded to the heart, refused, and (perhaps for the first time in his life) wept. Rodolph was compelled to force his presents on him.

Next day the prince sent for La Louve and Martial, and inquired what he could do for them. Remembering what Fleur-de-Marie had told him of the wild taste of La Louve and her husband, he proposed to the hardy couple either a considerable sum of money, or half the sum and land in full cultivation adjoining the farm he had bought for the Chourineur, believing that by bringing them together they would sympathise, from their desire to seek solitude, the one in consequence of the past, and the other from the crimes of his family. He was not mistaken. Martial and La Louve accepted joyfully; and then, talking the matter over with the Chourineur, they all three rejoiced in the prospects held out to them in Algeria. A sincere good feeling soon united the future colonists. Persons of their class judge quickly of each other, and like one another as speedily.

The Chourineur accompanied his new friend Martial to the Bicêtre and awaited him in the hackney-coach, which conducted them back to Paris after Martial, horror-struck, had left the dungeon of his mother and sister. The countenance of the Chourineur had completely changed; the bold expression and jovial humour which usually characterised his harsh features had given way to extreme dejection; his voice had lost something of its coarseness; a grief of heart, until then unknown to him, had broken down his energetic temperament. He looked kindly at Martial, and said,—

"Courage!—you have done all that good intentions could do; it is ended. Think now of your wife, and the children whom you have prevented from becoming criminals like their father and mother. To-night we leave Paris never to return to it, and you will never again hear of what so much distresses you now."

"True—true! But, after all, they are my sister and mother!"

"Yes; but when things must be, we must submit!" said the Chourineur, checking a deep sigh.

After a moment's silence, Martial said kindly, "And I ought, in my turn, to try and console you who are so sad. My wife and I hope that when we have left Paris this will cease."

"Yes," said the Chourineur, with a shudder, "if I leave Paris!"

"Why, we go this evening!"

"Yes—*you* do; you go this evening!"

"And have you changed your intention, then?"

"No! Yet, Martial, you'll laugh at me; but yet I will tell you all. If any thing happens to me it will prove that I am not deceived. When M. Rodolph asked if we would go to Algeria together, I told you my mind at once, and also what I had been."

"Yes, you did; let us mention it no more. You underwent your punishment, and are now as good as any one. But, like myself, I can imagine you would like to go and live a long way off, instead of living here, where, however honest we may be, they might at times fling in your teeth a misdeed you have atoned for and repented, and, in mine, my parents' crimes, for which I am by no means responsible. The past is the past between us, and we shall never reproach each other."

"With you and me, Martial, the past is the past; but, you see, Martial, there is something above—I have killed a man!"

"A great misfortune, assuredly; but, at the moment, you were out of your senses—mad. And besides, you have since saved the lives of other persons, and that will count in your favour."

"I'll tell you why I refer to my misdeed. I used to have a dream, in which I saw the serjeant I killed. I have not had it for a long time until last night, and that foretels some misfortune for to-day. I have a foreboding that I shall not quit Paris."

"Oh, you regret at leaving our benefactor! The thought of coming with me to the Bicêtre agitated you; and so your dream recurred to you."

The Chourineur shook his head sorrowfully and said, "It has come to me just as M. Rodolph is going to start—for he goes to-day. Yesterday I sent a messenger to his hôtel, not daring to go myself. They sent me word that he went this morning at eleven o'clock by the barrier of Charenton, and I mean to go and station myself there to try and see him once more—for the last time!"

"He seems so good that I easily understand your love for him."

"Love for him!" said the Chourineur, with deep and concentrated emotion; "yes, yes, Martial—to lie on the earth, eat black bread, be his dog, to be where he was, I asked no more. But that was too much—he would not consent."

"He has been very generous towards you!"

"Yet it is not for that I love him, but because he told me I had heart and honour. Yes, and that at a time when I was as fierce as a brute beast. And he made me understand what was good in me, and that I had repented, and, after suffering great misery, had worked hard for an honest livelihood, although all the world considered me as a thorough ruffian;—and so, when M. Rodolph said these words to me, my heart beat high and proudly, and from this time I would go through fire and water to serve him."

"Why, it is because you are better than you were that you ought not to have any of those forebodings. Your dream is nothing."

"We shall see. I shall not try and get into any mischief, for I cannot have any worse misfortune than not to see again M. Rodolph, whom I hoped never again to leave. I should have been in my way, you see,

always with him, body and soul—always ready. Never mind—perhaps he was wrong—I am only a worm at his feet; but sometimes, Martial, the smallest may be useful to the greatest."

"One day, perhaps, you may see him."

"Oh, no; he said to me, 'My good fellow, you must promise never to seek nor see me—that will be doing me a service:' so of course, Martial, I promised; and I 'll keep my word, though it is very hard."

"Once at Algeria, you will forget all your vexations."

"Yes, yes—I 'm an old trooper, Martial, and will face the Bedouins."

"Come, come—you 'll soon recover your spirits. We 'll farm and hunt together, and live together, or separate, just as you like. We 'll bring up the children like honest people, and you shall be their uncle—for we are brothers, and my wife is good at heart; and so we'll be happy, eh?" And Martial extended his hand to the Chourineur.

"So we will, Martial," was the reply; "and my sorrow will kill me, or I shall kill my sorrow."

"It will not kill you. We shall pass our days together; and every evening we will say, *Brother, thanks to M. Rodolph*—that shall be our prayer to him."

"Martial, you comfort me."

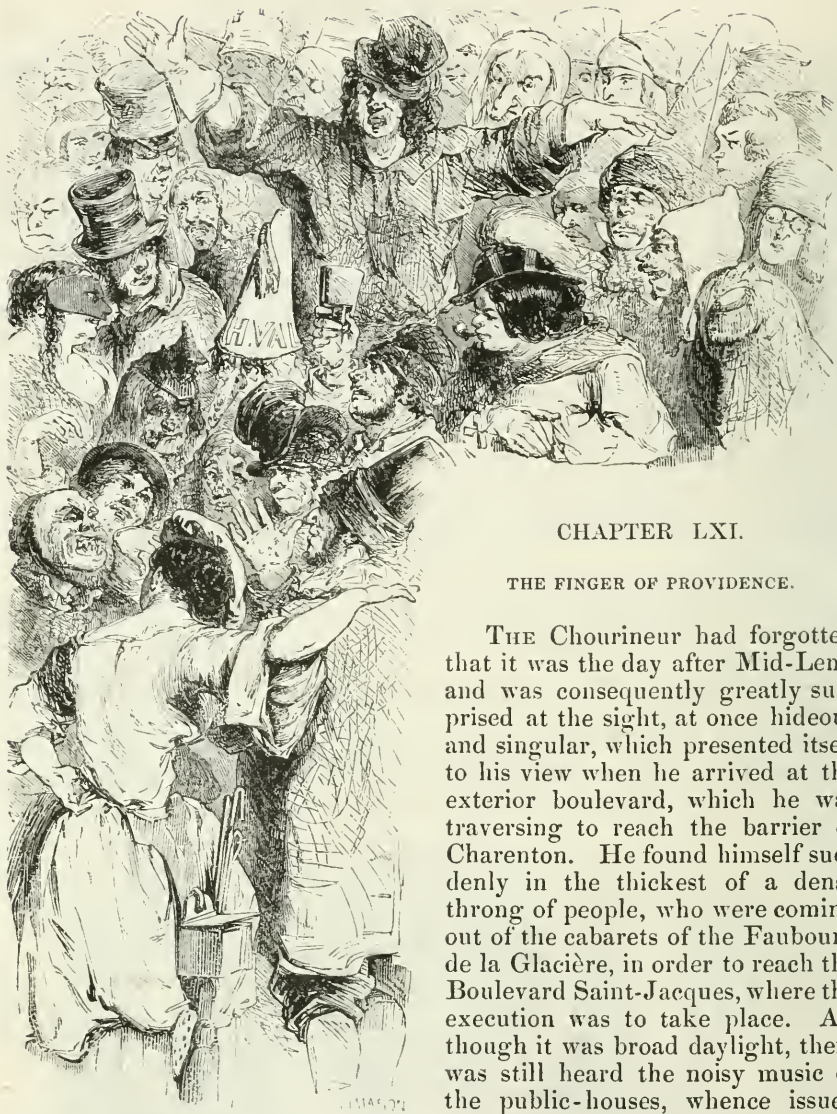
"Well, then, that is all right; and as to that stupid dream you will think no more of it, I hope?"

"I 'll try."

"Well, then, you 'll come to us at four o'clock; the diligence goes at five."

"Agreed. But I will get out here and walk to the barrier at Charenton, where I will await M. Rodolph, that I may see him pass."

The coach stopped, and the Chourineur alighted.



CHAPTER LXI.

THE FINGER OF PROVIDENCE.

The Chourineur had forgotten that it was the day after Mid-Lent, and was consequently greatly surprised at the sight, at once hideous and singular, which presented itself to his view when he arrived at the exterior boulevard, which he was traversing to reach the barrier of Charenton. He found himself suddenly in the thickest of a dense throng of people, who were coming out of the cabarets of the Faubourg de la Glacière, in order to reach the Boulevard Saint-Jacques, where the execution was to take place. Although it was broad daylight, there was still heard the noisy music of the public-houses, whence issued particularly the loud echoes of the cornets-à-piston. The pencil of Callot, of Rembrandt, or of Goya, is requisite to limn the strange, hideous, and fantastical appearance of this multitude. Almost all of them, men, women, and children, were attired in old masquerade costumes. Those who could not afford this expense had on their clothes rags of bright colours: some young men were dressed in women's clothes, half torn and soiled with mud—all their countenances, haggard from debauchery and vice, and furrowed by intoxication, sparkled with savage delight at the idea that, after a night of filthy orgies, they should see two women executed on the scaffold prepared for them.

The foul and fetid scum of the population of Paris, this vast mob was

formed of thieves and abandoned women, who every day tax crime for their daily bread, and every evening return to their lairs with their vicious spoils.* The crowd entirely choked up the means of circulation, and, in spite of his gigantic strength, the Chourineur was compelled to remain almost motionless in the midst of this compact throng. He was, however, willing to remain so, as the prince would not pass the barrier of Charenton until eleven o'clock, and it was not yet seven; and he had a singular spectacle before him.

In a large, low apartment, occupied at one end by musicians, surrounded by benches and tables laden with the fragments of a repast, broken plates, empty bottles, &c. &c., a dozen men and women, in various disguises and half drunk, were dancing with the utmost excitement that frantic and obscene dance called *La Chahut*. Amongst the dissipated revellers who figured in this saturnalia, the Chourineur remarked two couple who obtained the most overwhelming applause, from the revolting grossness of their attitudes, their gesticulations, and their language. The first couple consisted of a man disguised as a bear, and nearly covered with a waistcoat and trowsers of black sheepskin. The head of the animal, being too troublesome to carry, had been replaced by a kind of hood with long hair, which entirely covered his features; two holes for his eyes, and a long one for his mouth, allowed him to see, speak, and breathe. This man—one of the prisoners escaped from La Force (amongst whom were Barbillon and the two murderers arrested at the ogress's at the *tapis-franc*, at the beginning of this recital)—this man so masked was Nicolas Martial, the son and brother of the two women for whom the scaffold was prepared but a few paces' distant. Induced into this act of atrocious insensibility and infamous audacity by one of his associates, this wretch had dared with this disguise to join in the last revels of the carnival. The woman who danced with him, dressed as a *vivandière*, wore a round leather cap with ragged ribands, a kind of bodice of threadbare red cloth, ornamented with three rows of brass buttons, a green skirt, and trowsers of white calico—her black hair fell in disorder all about her head, and her haggard and swollen features evinced the utmost effrontery and immodesty. The *vis-à-vis* of these dancers were no less disgusting. The man, who was very tall, and disguised as *Robert Macaire*, had so begrimed his features with soot that it was impossible to recognise him, and, besides, a large bandage covered his left eye; the white of the right eye being thus the more heightened, rendered him still more hideous. The lower part of the Skeleton's countenance (for it was he) disappeared in a high neckcloth made of an old red shawl. Wearing an old, white, napless hat with a crushed side, dirty, and without a crown, a green coat in rags, and tight mulberry-coloured pantaloons, patched in every direction, and tied round the instep with pieces of packthread, this assassin outraged the most *outré* and revolting attitudes of the *Chahut*, darting from right to left, before and behind, his lanky limbs as hard as steel, and twisting and twining, and springing and bounding with such vigour and elasticity, that he seemed set in motion by steel springs. A worthy Coryphée of this filthy saturnalia, his lady

* It is calculated that there are in Paris 30,000 persons who have no other means of existence but theft.

partner, a tall and active creature with impudent and flushed features, attired *en débardeur*, wore a flat cap on one side of a powdered wig with a thick pigtail, a waistcoat and trowsers of worn green velvet, adjusted to her shape by an orange scarf, with long ends flowing down her back. A fat, vulgar, coarse woman, the brutal ogress of the *tapis-franc*, was seated on one of the benches, holding on her knees the plaid cloaks of this

creature and the *vivandière*, whilst they were rivalling the bounds, and jumps, and gross postures of the Skeleton and Nicolas Martial. Amongst the other dancers there was a lame boy, dressed like a devil, by means of a black net vest, much too large for him, red drawers, and a green mask hideous and grotesque. In spite of his infirmity, this little monster was wonderfully agile, and his precocious depravity equalled, if it could not

exceed that of his detestable companions, and he gambolled as impudently as any of them before a fat woman, dressed as a shepherdess, who excited her partner the more by her shouts of laughter. No charge having been raised against Tortillard (our readers have recognised him), and Bras-Rouge having been for the while left in prison, the boy, at his father's request, was reclaimed by Micou, the receiver of the passage of the Brasserie, who had not been denounced by his accomplices. As secondary figures in this picture, let imagination conceive all there is of the lowest, most shameful, and most monstrous, in this idle, wanton, insolent, rapacious, atheistical, sanguinary assemblage of infamy, which is most hostile to social order, and to which we would call the attention of all thinking persons as our recital draws to a close. Excited by the shouts of laughter and the cheers of the mob assembled round the windows, the actors in the infamous dance cried to the orchestra for a finale gallop. The musicians, delighted to reach the end of their labours, complied with the general wish, and played a galoppade with the utmost energy and rapidity. At this the excitement redoubled; the couples encircled each other and dashed away, following the Skeleton and his partner, who led off their infernal round amidst the wildest cries and acclamations. The crowd was so thick, so dense, and the evolutions so multiplied and rapid, that these creatures, inflamed with wine, exercise, and noise, their intoxication became delirious frenzy, and they soon ceased to have space for their movements. The Skeleton then cried, in a breathless voice, "Look out at the door!—we will go out on to the boulevard."

"Yes—yes!" cried the mob at the windows; "a gallop as far as the Barrier Saint-Jacques!"

"The two *mots* will soon be here."

"The headsman cuts double!—how funny!"

"Yes, with a cornet-à-piston accompaniment."

"I'll ask the widow to be my partner."

"And I the daughter."

"Death to the informers!"

"Long live the prigs and lads of steel!" cried the Skeleton in a voice of thunder, as he and the dancers, forcing their way in the midst of the mass, set the whole body in motion; and then were heard cries, and imprecations, and shouts of laughter, which had nothing human in their sound.

Suddenly this uproar reached its height by two fresh incidents. The vehicle which contained the criminals, accompanied by its escort of cavalry, appeared at the angle of the boulevard, and then all the mob rushed in that direction, shouting and roaring with ferocious delight. At this moment, also, the crowd was met by a courier coming from the Boulevard des Invalides, and galloping towards the Barrière de Charenton. He was dressed in a light blue jacket with yellow collar, with a double row of silver lace down the seams, but, as a mark of deep mourning, he wore black breeches and high boots; his cap also, with a broad band of silver, was encircled with crape, and on the winkers of his horse were the arms of Gerolstein. He walked his horse, his advance becoming every moment more difficult, and he was almost obliged to stop when he found himself in the midst of the sea of people we have described. Although he called

to them, and moved his horse with the greatest caution, cries, abuse, and threats were soon directed against him.

"Does he want to ride us down, that vagabond?"

"He's got lots o' silver on his precious body!" cried Tortillard.

"If he comes against us we'll make him alight and strip the 'tin' off his jacket to go to the melter's," said Nicolas.

"And we'll take the seams out of your carcase if you are not careful, you cursed jockey!" added the Skeleton, addressing the courier, and seizing the bridle of his horse—for the crowd was so dense that the ruffian had given up his idea of dancing to the barrier.

The courier, who was a powerful and resolute fellow, said to the Skeleton, lifting the handle of his whip, "If you do not let go my bridle, I'll lay my whip over you. Let me pass—my lord's carriage is coming close behind. Let me go forward, I say."

"Your lord!" said the Skeleton; "what is your lord to me? I'll slit his weasand if I like! I never *did for* a lord: I should like to try my hand."

"There are no more lords now. *Vive la Charte!*" shouted Tortillard; and as he said so he whistled a verse of the "Parisienne," and clinging to one of the courier's legs nearly drew him out of his saddle. A blow with the handle of his whip on Tortillard's head punished his insolence; but the populace instantly attacked the courier, who in vain spurred his horse—he could not advance a step. Dismounted, amidst the shouts of the mob, he would have been murdered but for the arrival of Rodolph's carriage, which took off the attention of these wretches. The prince's travelling carriage, drawn by four horses, had for some time past advanced at only a foot pace, and one of the two footmen had got down from the rumble and was walking by the side of the door, which was very low: the postilions kept crying out to the people, and went forward very cautiously.

Rodolph was dressed in deep mourning, as was also his daughter, one of whose hands he held in his own, looking at her with affection. The gentle and lovely face of Fleur-de-Marie was enclosed in a small capote of black crape, which heightened the dazzling brilliancy of her skin and the beautiful hue of her lovely brown hair; and the azure of this bright day was reflected in her large eyes, which had never been of more transparent and softened blue. Although her features wore a gentle smile, and expressed calmness and happiness when she looked at her father, yet a tinge of melancholy, and sometimes of undefinable sadness, threw their shadow over her countenance when her eyes were not fixed on her father.

At this moment the carriage came amongst the crowd and began to slacken its pace. Rodolph lowered the window, and said in German to the lacquey who was walking by the window, "Well, Frantz, what is the meaning of this?"

"Monseigneur, there is such a crowd that the horses cannot move."

"What has this assemblage collected for?"

"Monseigneur, there is an execution going on."

"Ah! frightful!" said Rodolph, throwing himself back in his carriage.

"What is it, my dear father?" asked Fleur-de-Marie with uneasiness.

"Nothing—nothing, dearest."

"Only listen—these threatening cries approach us! What can it be?"

"Desire them to reach Charenton by another road," said Rodolph.

"Monseigneur, it is too late, the crowd have stopped the horses."

The footman could say no more. The mob, excited by the savage encouragement of the Skeleton and Nicolas, suddenly surrounded the carriage, and, in spite of the threats of the postilions, stopped the horses, and Rodolph saw on all sides threatening, furious countenances, and above them all the Skeleton, who came to the door of the carriage.

"Take care, my dear father!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, throwing her arms round Rodolph's neck.

"Oh, you are the 'my lord,' are you?" said the Skeleton, thrusting his hideous head into the carriage.

Had it not been for his daughter's presence, Rodolph would have given way to the natural impetuosity of his character at this insolence; but he controlled himself, and coolly replied,

"What do you want, and why do you stop my carriage?"

"Because we choose," said the Skeleton. "Each in his turn. Yesterday you trampled on the mob, and to-day the mob will crush you if you stir."

"Father, we are lost!" murmured Fleur-de-Marie.

"Take courage, love! I understand," replied the prince; "it is the last day of the carnival—these fellows are tipsy: I will get rid of them."

"I say, my covey, come, get out, and your *mot* with you!" cried Nicolas; "why should you trample upon a parcel of poor people!"

"You seem to me to have drunk a good deal, and to desire to drink more," said Rodolph; "here, take this, and do not delay my carriage any longer," and he threw out his purse, which Tortillard caught.

"Oh, what, you are going to travel, eh? Well, then, you've got your pockets well lined, no doubt. Come, *shell out*, my blade, or I'll have your life." And he opened the door suddenly.

Rodolph's patience was exhausted. Alarmed for Fleur-de-Marie,

whose alarm increased every moment, and believing that a display of vigour would daunt the wretch, whom he believed to be only drunk, he sprung from the carriage, intending to seize the Skeleton by the throat. The latter suddenly receded, and then drawing a long knife-dirk from his pocket, rushed at Rodolph. Fleur-de-Marie, seeing the dirk raised to stab her father, gave a shriek, sprung from the carriage, and threw her arms round him. Her father's life must have been sacrificed but for the Chourineur, who at the commencement of this tumult, having recognised the livery of the prince, had contrived, by superhuman efforts, to reach the Skeleton; and at the moment when that ruffian menaced the prince with his knife, the Chourineur seized on his arm with one hand, and with the other grasping his collar, threw him backwards.

Although surprised, and from behind too, the Skeleton turned round, and recognising the Chourineur, cried,—"What! the man in the grey blouse from La Force? This time, then, I'll do for you!" and rushing

furiously at the Chourineur, he plunged his knife in his breast. The Chourineur staggered, but did not fall. The crowd kept him on his legs.

"The guard!—here come the guard!" exclaimed several voices in alarm.

At these words, and at the sight of the murder of the Chourineur, all this dense crowd, fearing to be compromised in the assassination, dispersed as if by magic, and fled in every direction; the Skeleton, Nicolas, Martial, and Tortillard, amongst the earliest.

When the guard came up, guided by the courier (who had escaped when the crowd had let him go to surround the prince's carriage), there only remained in this sad scene, Rodolph, his daughter, and the Chourineur, bathed in his blood. The two servants of the prince had seated him on the ground, with his back to a tree.

All this passed more quickly than it can be described, and at a few paces from the *guingette* from which the Skeleton and his band had issued.

The prince, pale and agitated, held in his arms Fleur-de-Marie, half fainting, whilst the postilions were repairing the harness broken in the scuffle.

"Quick!" said the prince, to his servants engaged in aiding the Chourineur, "convey this poor fellow to the *cabaret;* and you," he added, turning to the courier, "get on the box, and gallop back for Dr. David at the hôtel: you will find him there, as he does not leave until eleven o'clock."

The carriage went away at great speed, and the two servants conveyed the Chourineur to the low apartment in which the orgies had taken place; several of the women were still there.

"My poor, dear child!" said Rodolph, to his daughter, "let me take you to some room in this place where you can await me, for I cannot abandon this brave fellow, who has again saved my life."

"Oh, my dearest father, I entreat you do not leave me!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, with alarm, and seizing Rodolph's arm,—"do not leave me alone!—I should die with fright! Where you go I will go!"

"But this frightful spectacle?"

"Yes, thanks to this worthy man, you still live for me, my father, and therefore allow me to join you in thanking and consoling him."

The prince's perplexity was very great. His daughter evinced so much just fear of remaining alone in a room in this low haunt that he made up his mind to allow her to enter with him into the apartment, where they found the Chourineur.

The mistress of the tavern and many of the women who had remained (and amongst whom was the ogress of the *tapis-franc*), had hastily laid the wounded man on a mattrass, and then stanched and bound his wound with napkins. The Chourineur opened his eyes as Rodolph entered. At the sight of the prince his features, pale with approaching death, became animated. He smiled painfully, and said in a low voice,—

"Ah, M. Rodolph, it was very fortunate I was there!"

"Brave and devoted as ever!" said the prince, in an accent of despair,—"again you have saved my life!"

"I was going to the barrier of—Charenton—to try and see you go by—see you for the last time. Fortunately—I was unable to get in for the crowd—besides—it was—to happen—I told Martial so—I had a presentiment."

"A presentiment?"

"Yes, M. Rodolph—the dream—of the serjeant—last night."

"Oh, try and forget such ideas! Let us hope the wound is not mortal."

"Oh, yes, the Skeleton struck home! Never mind—I told Martial that a worm of the earth like me—might sometimes be useful—to a great lord—like you."

"But my life—I owe my life again to you!"

"We are quits, M. Rodolph. You told me—that I had—heart and honour. That word, you see—oh! I am choking! Sir, without—my asking—do me the honour—to give me your hand—I feel I am sinking."

"No! no!—impossible!" exclaimed the prince, bending towards the Chourineur, and clasping in his hands the icy hand of the dying man,—"no—you will live—you will live!"

"M. Rodolph, there is something, you see, above—I killed—with a blow of a knife—I die from the blow of a knife!" said the Chourineur, who was sinking fast.

At this moment his eyes turned towards Fleur-de-Marie, whom he had not before perceived. Amazement was depicted on his dying features; he made a movement, and said,—

"Ah!—the Goualeuse!"

"Yes, my daughter, who blesses you for having preserved her father!"

"She—your daughter—here? That reminds me of how our acquaintance began—M. Rodolph—and the blows—with the fist; but this blow with a knife will be the last—last blow. I slashed—and in my turn am slashed—stabbed. It is just." He heaved a deep sigh—his head fell back—he was dead.

The sound of horses without was heard; Rodolph's carriage had met that of Murphy and David, who, in their desire to rejoin the prince, had anticipated the hour fixed for their departure.

"David," said Rodolph, wiping his eyes, and pointing to the Chourineur, "is there no hope?"

"None, monseigneur," replied the doctor, after a moment's examination.

During this moment there passed a mute and terrible scene between Fleur-de-Marie and the ogress, whom Rodolph had not observed. When the Chourineur had uttered the name of La Goualeuse, the ogress had raised her head and looked at Fleur-de-Marie. The horrid hag had already recognised Rodolph: he was called monseigneur—he called La Goualeuse his daughter. Such a metamorphosis astounded the ogress, who obstinately fixed her stupid, wondering eyes on her former victim. Fleur-de-Marie, pale and overcome, seemed fascinated by her gaze. The death of the Chourineur, the unexpected appearance of the ogress, which came to awaken more painfully than ever the remembrance of her former degradation, appeared to her a sinister presage. From

this moment Fleur-de-Marie was struck with one of those presentiments which, in dispositions like hers, have most frequently an irresistible influence.

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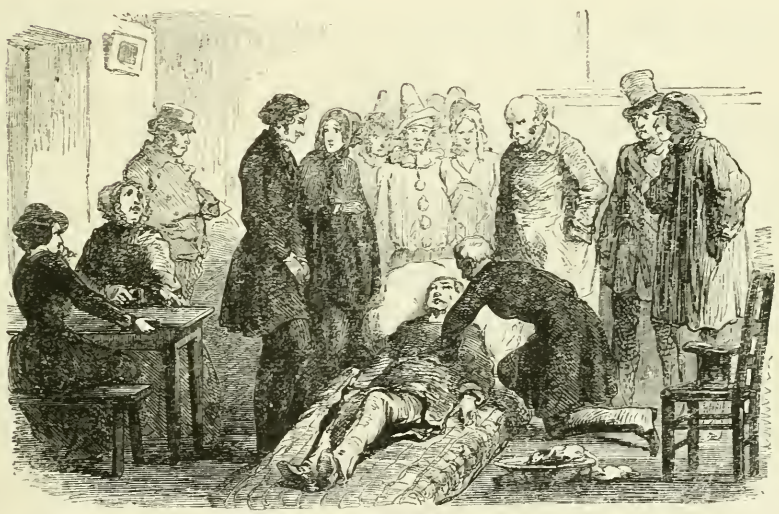
A few days after these events and Rodolph and his daughter quitted Paris for ever.



EPILOGUE.

CHAPTER I.

GEROLSTEIN.

Oldenzaal, 25th August, 1840.

PRINCE HENRY OF HERKAÜSEN-OLDENZAAL TO THE COUNT MAXIMILIAN KAMINETZ.

I AM just arrived from Gerolstein, where I have passed three months with the grand duke and his family. I expected to find a letter announcing your arrival at Oldenzaal, my dear Maximilian. Judge of my surprise—of my regret, on hearing that you will be detained in Hungary for several weeks.

For more than four months I have been unable to write to you, not knowing where to direct my letters, thanks to your original and adventurous manner of travelling. You had, however, formally promised me at Vienna, that you would be at Oldenzaal the 1st of August; I must then give up the pleasure of seeing you, and yet I have never had greater need of pouring forth my sorrows to you, Maximilian, my oldest friend, for although we are both of us still very young, our friendship is of long standing, as it dates from our childhood.

What shall I say to you? During the last three months a complete revolution has taken place in me. I am at one of those moments that decide the existence of a man. Judge, then, how necessary your presence and your advice are to me. But you will not long be wanting, whatever motives you have for remaining in Hungary. Come!—come! I entreat of you, Maximilian, for I stand in need of you to console me, and I cannot go to seek you. My father, whose health is daily declining, has summoned me from Gerolstein. Each day makes so great an alteration in him, that it is impossible for me to leave him.

I have so much to say that I shall become tedious, but I must relate to you the most important—the most romantic incident of my life. Why were you not there, my friend?—why were you not there? For three months my heart has been a prey to emotions equally sweet and sorrowful, and I was alone—I was alone. Sympathise with me, you who know the sensibility of my heart—you who have seen my eyes filled with tears

at the simple recital of a noble or generous action—at the simple sight of a splendid sunset—of the sky studded with bright stars. Do you recollect last year, on our excursion to the ruins of Oppenfeld, on the shore of the vast lake, our reveries during that evening, so full of calm, of poesy, and of peace? Strange contrast! it was three days before that bloody duel, in which I would not accept you for my second, for I should have suffered too much for you had I been wounded before your eyes—the duel in which, for a dispute at play, my second unhappily killed the young Frenchman, the Comte de Saint-Rémy. *Apropos*, do you know what has become of the dangerous syren whom M. de Saint-Rémy brought with him to Oppenfeld, and whose name was, I think, Cecily David? You will doubtless, my friend, smile with pity at seeing me thus losing myself amongst idle recollections of the past, instead of coming at once to the grave disclosures that I have announced my intention of making; but, in spite of myself, I delay the time from moment to moment. I know how severe you are, and I am fearful of being blamed. Yes! blamed; because, instead of acting with reflection and prudence (prudence of one-and-twenty, alas!), I have acted foolishly, or, rather, I have not acted at all as —— I have suffered myself to be carried away by the stream that urged me on, and it is only since my return from Gerolstein that I have been awakened from the enchanting vision that has lulled me to sleep for the last three months, and this awaking has been sorrowful one. Now, my friend, my dear Maximilian, I take courage. Hear me indulgently; I begin with fear and trembling—I dare not look at you, for when you read these lines, how grave and stern will your face become, stoic that you are!

After having obtained leave of absence for six months, I left Vienna, and remained some time with my father. His health was then good, and he advised me to visit my aunt, the Princess Juliana, superior of the abbey of Gerolstein. I think I have already told you that my grandfather was cousin-german to the present duke's grandfather, and the Duke Gustavus Rodolph, thanks to this relationship, had always treated my father and myself as his cousins. You also know, I think, that during a long stay the prince made recently in France my father was left at the head of the affairs of the duchy. It is not any feeling of ostentatious pride, as you well know, Maximilian, that makes me recapitulate all these circumstances, but to explain to you the causes of the extreme intimacy that existed between the grand duke and myself during my stay at Gerolstein.

Do you recollect that last year, after our voyage on the banks of the Rhine, we heard that the prince had found and married, *in extremis*, the Countess Macgregor, in order to legitimise the daughter he had had by her by a previous and secret marriage, afterwards annulled, because it had been contracted against the consent of the late grand duke? This young girl, thus formally recognised, this charming Princess Amelie, of whom Lord Dudley, who had seen her at Gerolstein about a year ago, spoke to us with an enthusiasm that we suspected of exaggeration, strange chance! who would have said then —— But although you have doubtless penetrated my secret, let me pursue the progress of events. The convent of Ste. Hermangeld, of which my aunt is abbess, is

scarcely a quarter of a league from Gerolstein, for the gardens of the abbey touch the outskirts of the town. A charming house, perfectly isolated from the cloisters, had been placed at my disposal by my aunt, who has, as you know, the affection of a mother for me. The day of my

Superior of the Abbey of Gerolstein.

arrival she informed me a grand drawing-room would be held the next day, as the grand duke was going formally to announce his intended marriage with La Marquise d'Harville, who had just arrived at Gerolstein with her father, the Comte d'Orbigny. The duke was blamed by some for not having sought an alliance with some royal house, but others, and amongst them my aunt, congratulated him on having chosen, instead of a marriage of ambition, a young and lovely woman to whom he was deeply attached, and who belonged to one of the first families in France. You know, too, that my aunt has always had the greatest regard for the grand duke, and has always appreciated his fine qualities.

"My dear child," said she to me, speaking of the drawing-room, to

which I was going the next day,—"my dear child, the most astonishing sight you will see to-morrow will be the pearl of Gerolstein."

"Of whom are you talking, my dear aunt?"

"Of the Princess Amelie."

"The grand duke's daughter? Lord Dudley spoke of her at Vienna with a warmth we suspected of exaggeration."

"At my age and in my position," replied my aunt, "people do not exaggerate, so you can trust to my judgment, and I assure you I never knew any one more enchanting than the Princess Amelie. I would speak of her beauty were it not for an indefinable charm she possesses, superior even to her beauty. From the first day that the grand duke presented me to her, I felt myself irresistibly drawn towards her; and I am not the only person. The Archduchess Sophia is at Gerolstein, and is the most proud and haughty princess I know."

"Very true, aunt; her irony is terrible, very few persons escape from her sarcasms; at Vienna every one dreaded her. Can the Princess Amelie have found favour in her eyes?"

"The other day she came here after visiting the asylum placed under the princess's direction. 'Do you know,' said this redoubtable archduchess to me, 'that if I resided long with the grand duke's daughter I should become quite harmless, so contagious is her goodness!'"

"Why, my cousin must be an enchantress!" said I, laughing, to my aunt.

"Her most powerful charm, at least in my eyes," replied my aunt, "is the mixture of sweetness, modesty, and dignity, that I have told you of, and which gives a most touching expression to her face."

"Indeed, aunt, modesty is a rare quality in a princess so young, so beautiful, and so happy."

"Reflect that the princess is still more deserving of praise for her modesty, as her elevation is so very recent."

"In her interview with you, aunt, did the princess make any reference to her early life?"

"No! but when, notwithstanding my advanced age, I addressed her with the respect due to her rank, since her royal highness is the grand duke's daughter, her ingenuous confusion, mingled with gratitude and veneration for me, quite overpowered me; for her reserve, full of dignity and affability, proved to me that her present elevation did not make her forget her past life, and that she accorded to my age what I accorded to her rank."

"It must require," said I, "the most perfect tact to observe those nice differences."

"My dear boy, the more I see of the princess, the more I congratulate myself on my first impression. Since she has been here the number of charitable acts she has done is incredible, and that with a reflection and a judgment that in a person of her age quite surprises me. Judge yourself. At her request the grand duke has founded at Gerolstein an establishment for orphans of five or six years, and for young girls (who are either orphans or abandoned by their parents) of the age of sixteen, that age so fatal to those who are not protected against the temptations of vice or the pressure of want. The good sisters of my convent teach and direct the children of this asylum. During my visits there I have had ample opportunities of judging of the adoration that these poor, unfortunate creatures have for the princess. Every day she spends several hours at this place, which is placed under her protection, and I repeat that it is not merely gratitude and respect that the children and nuns feel towards the princess, it almost amounts to fanaticism."

"The princess must be an angel," said I to my aunt.

"An angel, indeed!" replied she, "for you cannot conceive with what touching kindness she treats her young *protégées*. I have never seen the susceptibility of misfortune meet with more delicate sympathy. You would think some irresistible attraction drew the princess towards this class of unfortunates. Will you believe it? she, the daughter of a sovereign, only addresses these poor children as 'my sisters!'"

At these last words of my aunt, I confess I felt my eyes fill with tears. Do you not also admire the admirable and pious conduct of this young princess?

"Since the princess," said I, "is so marvellously gifted, I shall be greatly embarrassed when I am presented to her to-morrow. You know how timid I am—you know, also, that elevation of character imposes upon me more than high birth, so that I am certain to appear both stupid and embarrassed to-morrow; so I make up my mind to that beforehand."

"Come, come!" said my aunt, smiling, "she will take pity upon you, the more readily as you are not quite a stranger to her."

"I am not a stranger to her, aunt?"

"Certainly not."

"How so?"

"You recollect that when at the age of sixteen you left Oldenzaal, to

travel with your father through Russia and England, I had your portrait painted in the costume you wore at the first *bal costumé* the late duchess gave?"

"Yes, aunt, the costume of a German page of the sixteenth century."

"Our famous painter, Fritz Mocker, whilst he painted a faithful likeness of you, not only produced a page of that century, but even the style of the pictures of that time. Some days after her arrival at Gerolstein, the Princess Amelie, who had come with her father to visit me, remarked your portrait, and asked what was that charming picture of

Prince Henri.

olden times. Her father smiled, and said, 'This is the portrait of a cousin of ours, who would be were he now alive (as you see by his dress), some three hundred years old, but who, although very young, made himself remarkable for his courage and goodness of heart; has he not bravery in his eyes and goodness in his smile?'"

Do not, I entreat you, Maximilian, shrug your shoulders with disdain at seeing me write these puerile details of myself, which are, alas! necessary to my story.

"The Princess Amelie," continued my aunt, "deceived by this innocent pleasantry, after a long examination of your portrait, joined with her father in praising the amiable and determined expression of your face. Some time after, when I went to Gerolstein, she questioned me playfully about 'her cousin of the olden time.' I then explained the trick to her, and told her that the handsome page of the sixteenth century was really the Prince Henri d'Herkaüsen Oldenzaal, a young man of one-and-twenty, captain in the guards of his majesty the Emperor of Austria, and in every other respect than the costume very like his picture. At these words the princess," continued my aunt, "blushed and became serious, and has never since spoken of the picture. However, you see that you are not quite a stranger to your cousin; so take courage, and maintain the reputation of your portrait."

This conversation took place, as I have already told you, the evening previous to the day on which I was to be presented to the princess my cousin. I left my aunt, and returned to my own apartments.

II.

You have often told me, my dear Maximilian, that I was totally free from vanity; I must therefore trust to that to prevent my appearing vain during this recital.

As soon as I was alone I reflected with a secret satisfaction that the Princess Amelie, after seeing my portrait, painted five or six years ago, had inquired after "her cousin of the olden time."

Nothing could be more absurd than to build the slightest hope on so trivial a circumstance, I acknowledge; but I always treat you with the most perfect confidence, and I acknowledge that this trifling circumstance delighted me.

No doubt the praise I had just heard bestowed on the princess by so grave and austere a person as my aunt, by raising her in my estimation, rendered this circumstance more agreeable.

Why should I tell you? The hopes I conceived from this trifling event were so mad that, now that I look back more calmly on the past, I ask myself how I could have indulged in ideas that must have ended in my destruction.

Although related to the grand duke, and always treated by him with the greatest kindness, yet it was impossible to entertain the slightest hope of a marriage with the princess; even had she returned my affection it would still have been impossible. Our family holds an honourable position, but it is poor when compared with the grand duke, the richest prince of the German confederation; and besides, I was only one-and-twenty, a simple captain in the guards, without any reputation or any position. Never could the grand duke think of me as a suitor for his daughter.

All these reflections ought to have saved me from a passion I did not as yet feel, but of which I had a strange presentiment. Alas! I rather gave way to fresh puerilities; I wore on my finger a ring that Thecla (the countess of whom I have so often spoken) had given me, although this souvenir of a boyish love could not have much embarrassed me. I sacrificed

it to my new flame, and opening the window I cast the ring into the waves of the river that flowed beneath.

I have no need to tell you what a night I passed, you can imagine; I knew the princess was very beautiful; I sought to picture to myself her features, her air, her manner, her figure, the sound of her voice; and thinking of my portrait which she had noticed I recollected that the artist had flattered me excessively, and I contrasted the picturesque dress of a page of the sixteenth century with the simple uniform of a captain of the Austrian guards. But amidst all these absurd ideas some generous thoughts crossed my mind, and I was overcome—yes, overcome by the recollection of the tenderness of the princess for those poor girls whom she always terms "my sisters."

The next day the hour for the reception came. I tried on several uniforms one after another, found them all to fit me very ill, and departed very dissatisfied with myself.

Although Gerolstein is only a quarter of a league from Ste. Hermangeld, during the short journey all the childish ideas that had so occupied me during the night had given place to one sad and grave thought.

An invincible presentiment told me I was approaching one of the crises of my life. A magical inspiration revealed to me that I was about to love, to love as a man loves but once in his life; and, as if to complete my misfortunes, this love, as loftily as deservedly bestowed, was doomed to be unhappy.

You do not know the grand ducal palace of Gerolstein. In the opinion of every one who has visited the capitals of Europe, there is, with the exception of Versailles, no royal residence has a more regal and imposing appearance.

If at this time I speak of this, it is because, thinking over them, I wonder how they did not recall me to myself; for the Princess Amelie was the daughter of the sovereign of this palace, these guards, and of these riches.

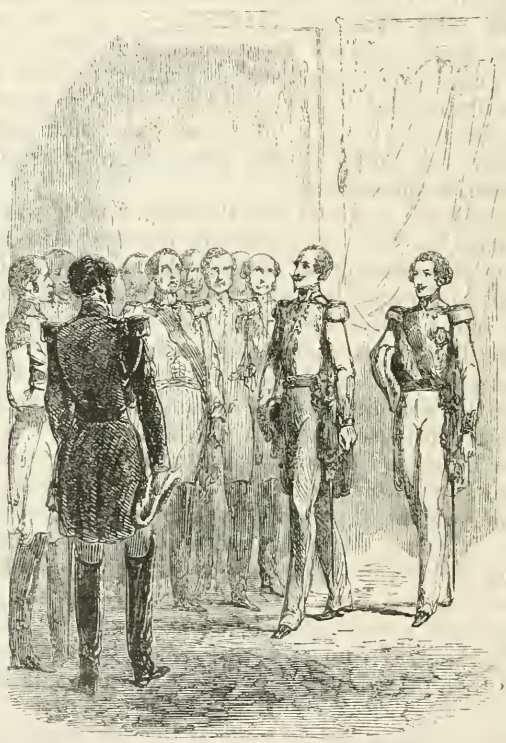
You arrived at the palace by *the marble court;* so called, because, with the exception of a drive for the carriages, it is paved with variegated marble, forming the most magnificent mosaics, in the centre of which is a basin of breccia antique, into which a stream of water flows from a porphyry vase.

This court of honour is surrounded by a row of beautiful marble statues, holding candelabras of gilt bronze, from which sprung brilliant jets of gas. Alternately with these statues are Medicean vases, raised on richly sculptured pedestals, and filled with rose laurels, whose leaves shine in the lights with a metallic lustre.

The carriages stopped at the foot of the double staircase leading to the perstyle of the palace. At the foot of this staircase were stationed on guard, mounted on their black horses, two soldiers of the regiment of the guards of the grand duke. You would have been struck with the stern and warlike appearance of these two giants, whose cuirasses and helmets, made like those of the ancients, without crest or plume, sparkled in the sun. These soldiers wore blue coats with yellow collars, buckskin breeches, and jack-boots. To please you who are so fond of military details, I add, that at the top landing of the staircase were stationed, as

sentinels, two grenadiers of the foot-guards of the duke. Their uniform, with the exception of the colour of the coat and facings, resembles, I am told, that of Napoleon's grenadiers.

After traversing the vestibule, where the porters of the duke were stationed, halberd in hand, I ascended a splendid staircase of white marble, which opened upon a portico, ornamented with jasper columns, and surmounted by a painted and gilt cupola. There were two long files of domestics. I then entered the guard-room, at the door of which I found a chamberlain and an aide-de-camp, whose duty it was to present to his royal highness those persons who were entitled to this honour. My relationship, though distant, procured me a special presentation. An aide-de-camp preceded me into a long gallery, filled with gentlemen in full court-dress or uniform, and splendidly attired ladies.



Whilst I passed through this brilliant assembly, I heard here and there remarks that augmented my embarrassment. Every one admired the angelic beauty of the Princess Amelie, the charming appearance of the Marquise d'Harville, and the imperial air of the Archduchess Sophia, who, recently arrived from Munich with the Archduke Stanislaus, was about to depart for Warsaw; but whilst rendering their just tribute of admiration to the lofty bearing of the duchess and to the charms of the

Marquise d'Harville, every one agreed that nothing could exceed the loveliness of the Princess Amelie.

As I approached the spot where the grand duke and the princess were I felt my heart beat more and more violently. At the moment that I entered the saloon (I forgot to tell you there was a concert and ball at court) the famous Listz sat down to the piano, and instantly the most profound silence succeeded to the conversation that was going on. I waited in the embrasure of a door until Listz had finished the piece he was playing with his accustomed taste.

It was then that I saw the Princess Amelie for the first time.

I must tell you all that passed, for I feel an indescribable pleasure in writing it.

Picture to yourself a large saloon furnished with regal splendour, brilliantly lighted up, and hung with crimson silk, embroidered with wreaths of flowers in gold. In the first row, on large gilt chairs, sat the Archduchess Sophia with Madame d'Harville on her left, and the Princess Amelie on her right; behind them stood the duke in the uniform of colonel of the guards, he seemed scarcely thirty, and the military uniform set off his fine figure and noble features; beside him was the Archduke Stanislaus in the uniform of a field-marshal; then came the princess's maids of honour, the ladies of the grand dignitaries of the court, and then the dignitaries themselves.

I need scarcely tell you that the Princess Amelie was less conspicuous by her rank than by her extraordinary beauty. Do not condemn me without reading this description of her. Although it falls far short of the reality, you will understand my adoration. You will understand that as soon as I saw her I loved her; and that the suddenness of my passion can only be equalled by its violence and its eternity.

The Princess Amelie was dressed in a plain white watered silk dress, and wore, like the archduchess, the riband of the imperial order of St. Nepomucenus recently sent to her by the empress. A diadem of pearls surrounded her head, and harmonised admirably with two splendid braids of fair hair that shaded her delicate cheeks. Her arms, whiter than the lace that ornamented them, were half hidden in long gloves, reaching nearly to her elbow. Nothing could be more perfect than her figure, nothing more charming than her foot in its satin slipper. At the moment when I saw her her beaming blue eyes wore a pensive expression. I do not know whether some serious thought came over her, or whether she was impressed with the grave melody of the piece Listz was playing; but the expression of her countenance seemed to me full of sweetness and melancholy.

Never can I express my feelings at that moment. All that my aunt had related of her goodness crossed my mind.

Smile if you will, but my eyes became full of tears when I saw this young girl, so beautiful and so idolised by such a father, seem so melancholy and pensive.

You know how scrupulously etiquette and the privileges of rank are observed by us. Thanks to my title and my relationship to the grand duke, the crowd in the midst of which I stood gradually fell back, and I found myself left almost alone in the embrasure of the door. It was, no doubt,

owing to this circumstance that the princess, awaking from her reverie, perceived, and no doubt recognised me, for she started and blushed.

The Princess Amelie.

She had seen my portrait at my aunt's, and recognised me; nothing could be more simple. The princess's eyes did not rest upon me an instant, but that look threw me into the most violent confusion. I felt my cheeks glow, I cast down my eyes, and did not venture to raise them for some time. When I dared at last steal a glance at the princess she was speaking in a low tone to the archduchess, who seemed to listen to her with the most affectionate interest.

Listz having paused for a few moments between the pieces he was playing, the grand duke took the opportunity of expressing his admiration. On returning to his place he perceived me, nodded kindly to me,

and said something to the archduchess, fixing his eyes on me at the same time. The duchess, after looking at me a moment, turned to the duke, who smiled and said something to his daughter that seemed to embarrass her, for she blushed again. I was on thorns; but, unfortunately, etiquette forbade my leaving my place until the concert was over.

As soon as the concert was finished I followed the aide-de-camp; he conducted me to the grand duke, who deigned to advance a few steps towards me, took me by the arm, and said to the Archduchess Sophia,—

"Permit me to present to your royal highness my cousin, Prince Henry of Herkaüsen-Oldenzaal."

"I have seen the prince at Vienna, and meet him here with pleasure," replied the duchess, before whom I inclined myself respectfully.

"My dear Amelie," continued the prince, addressing his daughter, "this is Prince Henry, your cousin, the son of one of my most valued friends, Prince Paul, whom I greatly lament not seeing here to-day."

"Pray, monseigneur, inform the prince that I equally regret his absence, for I am always delighted to know any of my father's friends."

I had not until then heard the princess's voice, and I was struck with its intense sweetness.

"I hope, my dear Henry, you will stay some time with your aunt," said the grand duke. "Come and see us often about three o'clock *en famille;* and if we ride out you must accompany us. You know how great an affection I have always felt for you, for your noble qualities."

"I cannot express my gratitude for your royal highness's kindness."

"Well, to prove it," said the grand duke, smiling, "engage your cousin for the second quadrille; the first belongs to the archduke."

"Will your royal highness do me the honour?" said I to my cousin.

"Oh, call each other cousin, as in the good old times," replied the duke, laughing. "There should be no ceremony between relations."

"Will you dance with me, cousin?"

"Yes, cousin," replied the princess.

I cannot tell you how much I felt the touching kindness of the grand duke, and how bitterly I reproached myself for yielding to an affection the prince would never authorise.

I vowed inwardly that nothing should induce me to acquaint my cousin with my affection, but I feared my emotion would betray me.

I had leisure for these reflections whilst my cousin danced the first quadrille with the Archduke Stanislaus. Nothing was more suited to display the graces of the princess's person than the slow movements of the dance. I anxiously awaited my turn; and I succeeded in concealing my emotion when I led her to the quadrille.

"Does your royal highness sanction my calling you cousin?" said I.

"Oh yes, cousin, I am always delighted to obey my father."

"I rejoice in this familiarity, since I have learnt from my aunt to know you."

"My father has often spoken of you, cousin; and what may, perhaps, astonish you," added she, timidly, "I also knew you by sight; for one day the Abbess of Ste. Hermangeld, your aunt, for whom I have the greatest respect, shewed me your picture."

"As a page of the sixteenth century?"

"Yes, cousin; and my father was malicious enough to tell me that it was an ancestor of ours, and spoke so highly of his courage and his other qualities that our family ought to be proud of their descent from him."

"Alas, cousin, I fear my resemblance to my portrait is not great!"

"You are mistaken, cousin," said the princess. "For at the end of the concert I recognised you immediately, in spite of the difference of costume." Then, wishing to change the conversation, she added, "How charmingly M. Listz plays!—does he not?"

"Yes. How attentively you listened to him!"

"Because there is to me a double charm in music without words. Not only you hear the execution, but you can adapt your thoughts to the melody. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly; your own thoughts become words to the air."

"Yes, you quite comprehend me," said she, with a gesture of satisfaction. "I feared I could not express what I felt just now."

"I thank God, cousin," said I, smiling, "you can have no words to set to so sad an air."

I know not whether my question was indiscreet or whether she had not heard me, but suddenly she exclaimed, pointing out to me the grand duke, who crossed the room with the archduchess on his arm, "Cousin, look at my father, how handsome he is! how noble! how good!—every one looks at him as if they loved him more than they feared him."

"Ah!" cried I, "it is not only here he is beloved. If the blessing of his people be transmitted to their posterity, the name of Rodolph of Gerolstein will be immortal."

"To speak thus is to be, indeed, worthy of his attachment."

"I do but give utterance to the feelings of all present: see how they all hasten to pay their respects to Madame d'Harville!"

"No one in the world is more worthy of my father's affections than Madame d'Harville."

"You are more capable than any one of appreciating her, as you have been in France."

Scarcely had I pronounced these words than the princess cast down her eyes, and her features assumed an air of melancholy; and when I led her back to her seat the expression of them was still the same. I suppose that my allusion to her stay in France recalled the death of her mother.

In the course of the evening a circumstance occurred which you may think too trivial to mention, perhaps, but which evinces the extraordinary influence this young girl universally inspires. Her bandeau of pearls having become deranged, the archduchess Sophia, who was leaning on her arm, kindly readjusted the ornament upon her brow. Knowing, as

we do, the hauteur of the archduchess, such condescension is almost inconceivable.

The next morning I was invited, together with a few other persons, to be present at the marriage of the grand duke with Madame la Marquise d'Harville. I had never seen the princess so radiant and happy.

Some days after the duke's marriage I had a long interview with him. He questioned me about my past life, my future career. He gave me the most admirable advice, the kindest encouragement. So much so that the idea crossed my mind that he had perceived my love and wished to bring me to confess it.

But this idea was soon dispelled. The prince concluded by telling me that the great wars were over, that I ought to avail myself of my name, my connexions, the education I had received, and my father's friendship with the Prince de M——, prime minister of the emperor, in order to follow a diplomatic instead of a military career. In a word, he offered me his sovereign protection to facilitate my entry in the career he proposed to me.

I thanked him for his offers with gratitude, and added, that I felt the weight of his advice and would follow it.

I at first visited the palace very seldom; but, thanks to the duke's reiterated invitations, I was soon there almost every day. We lived in the peaceful retirement resembling that of some English mansion. When the weather permitted we rode out with the duke, the duchess, and the grand personages of the court. When we were forced to remain at home we sang, and I accompanied the grand duchess and my cousin, who had the sweetest and most expressive voice I ever heard. At other times we inspected the magnificent picture-galleries and museums, and the library of the prince, who is one of the most accomplished men in Europe. I often dined at the palace, and on the opera nights I accompanied the duke's family to the theatre.

Could this intimacy have lasted for ever I should have been happy, perhaps, but I reflected that I should be summoned to Vienna by my duties. I reflected, also, that the duke would soon think of finding a suitable alliance for his daughter.

My cousin remarked this change in me. The evening before I quitted Gerolstein she told me she had for several days remarked my abstracted manner. I endeavoured to evade this question, saying that my approaching departure was the cause.

"I can scarcely believe it," replied she; "my father treats you like a son, every one loves you: it would be ingratitude if you were unhappy."

"Alas!" said I, unable to restrain my emotion, "it is grief I am a prey to!"

"Why, what has happened?"

"Just now, cousin, you have told me your father treated me like a son, and that every one loved me; and yet, ere long, I must quit Gerolstein: it is this that grieves me."

"And are the recollections of those you have left as nothing?"

"Doubtless; but time brings so many changes."

"There are affections, at least, that are unchangeable; such as that of my father for you, such as that I feel for you: when you are once brother

and sister you never forget each other," added she, looking up, her large blue eyes full of tears.

I was on the point of betraying myself, however I controlled my feelings in time.

"Do you think then, cousin," said I, "that when I return in a few years this affection will continue?"

"Why should it not?"

"Because you will be probably married; you will have other duties to perform, and you will forget your poor brother."

This was all that passed; I know not if she was offended at these words, or whether she was like myself grieved at the changes the future must bring; but, instead of answering me, she was silent for a moment, then, rising hastily from her seat, her face pale and altered, she left the room, after having looked for a few seconds at the embroidery of the young Countess d'Oppenheim, one of her maids of honour. The same evening I received a second letter from my father, urging me to return. The next morning I took leave of the grand duke, he told me my cousin was unwell, but that he would make my adieux; he then embraced me tenderly, renewed his promises of assistance, and added that, whenever I had leave of absence, nothing would give him greater pleasure than to see me at Gerolstein. Happily, on my arrival, I found my father better; still confined to his bed, and very weak, it is true, but out of danger. Now that you know all, Maximilian, tell me, what can I do?

Just as I finished this letter, my door opened, and, to my great surprise, my father, whom I believed to be in bed, entered; he saw the letter on the table.

"To whom are you writing so long a letter?" said he, smiling.

"To Maximilian, father."

"Oh," said he, with an expression of affectionate reproach, "he has all your confidence! *He is very happy!*"

He pronounced these last words in so sorrowful a tone, that I held out the letter to him, almost without reflection, saying,—

"Read it, father."

My friend, he has read all! After having remained musing some time he said to me,—

"Henry, I shall write and inform the grand duke of all that passed during your stay at Gerolstein."

"Father, I entreat you not!"

"Is what you have written to Maximilian scrupulously true?"

"Yes."

"Do you love your cousin?"

"I adore her; but ——"

My father interrupted me.

"Then, in that case, I shall write to the grand duke and demand her hand for you."

"But, father, such a demand will be madness on my part!"

"It is true; but still, in making this demand, I shall acquaint the prince with my reasons for making it. He has received you with the greatest kindness, and it would be unworthy of me to deceive him. He will be touched at the frankness of my demand, and, though he refuse it, as he certainly will, he will yet know that, should you ever again visit Gerolstein, you cannot be on the same familiar terms with the princess."

You know that, although so tenderly attached to me, my father is inflexible in whatever concerns his duty; judge then of my fears, of my anxiety.

I hastily terminate this long letter, but I will soon write again. Sympathise with me, for I fear I shall go mad if the fever that preys on me does not soon abate. Adieu, adieu! Ever yours,

HENRY D'H. O.

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We will now conduct the reader to the palace of Gerolstein, inhabited by Fleur-de-Marie since her return from France.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRINCESS AMELIE.

The apartment of Fleur-de-Marie (we only call her the Princess Amelie *officially*) had been by Rodolph's orders splendidly furnished. From the balcony of the oratory the two towers of the Convent of Ste. Hermangilde were visible, which, embosomed in the woods, were in their turn overtopped by a high hill, at the foot of which the abbey was built. One fine summer's morning Fleur-de-Marie gazed listlessly at this splendid landscape; her hair was plainly braided, and she wore a high, white dress with blue stripes; a large muslin collar was fastened round her throat by a small blue silk handkerchief, of the same hue as her sash. Seated in a large arm-chair of carved ebony, she leant her head on her small and delicately white hand. Fleur-de-Marie's attitude and the expression of her face shewed that she was a prey to the deepest melancholy. At this instant a female of a grave and distinguished appearance entered the room, and coughed gently to attract Fleur-de-Marie's attention. She started from her reverie, and gracefully acknowledging the salutation of the new comer, said,—

"What is it, my dear countess?"

"I come to inform your royal highness that the grand duke will be here in a few minutes, and, also, to ask a favour of you."

"Ask it, you know how happy I am to oblige you."

"It concerns an unhappy creature who had unfortunately quitted Gerolstein before your royal highness had founded the asylum for orphans and children abandoned by their parents."

"What do you wish I should do for her?"

"The father went to seek his fortune in America, leaving his wife and daughter to gain a precarious subsistence. The mother died, and this poor girl, then only sixteen, was seduced and abandoned. She fell lower and lower, until at length she became, like so many others, the opprobrium of her sex."

Fleur-de-Marie turned red and shuddered. The countess, fearing she had wounded the delicacy of the princess by the mention of this girl's condition, replied,—

"I pray your royal highness to pardon me: I have, doubtless, shocked you by speaking of this wretched creature, but her repentance seemed so sincere that I ventured to plead for her."

"You were quite right. Pray continue," said Fleur-de-Marie, subduing her emotion. "Every fault is worthy of pity when followed by repentance."

"After two years passed in this wretched mode of existence she repented sincerely, and came back to Gerolstein. She chanced to lodge in the house of a good and pious widow; encouraged by her kindness, the poor creature told her all her sad story, adding that she bitterly regretted the faults of her early life, and that all she desired was to enter some religious house, where by prayer and penitence she might atone for her sins. She is only eighteen, very beautiful, and possesses a considerable sum of money, which she wishes to bestow on the convent she enters."

"I undertake to provide for her," said Fleur-de-Marie; "since she repents, she is worthy of compassion: her remorse must be more bitter in proportion as it is sincere."

"I hear the grand duke," said the lady in waiting, without remarking Fleur-de-Marie's agitation; and, as she spoke, Rodolph entered, holding a large bouquet of roses in his hand.

At the sight of the prince the countess retired, and scarcely had she left the apartment than Fleur-de-Marie threw herself into her father's arms, and leant her head on his shoulder.

"Good morning, love," said Rodolph, pressing her to his heart. "See what beautiful roses; I never saw finer ones." And the prince made a slight motion as if to disengage himself from her and look at her, when, seeing her weeping, he threw down the bouquet, and, taking her hands, cried,—

"You are weeping! What is the matter?"

"Nothing, dear father," said Fleur-de-Marie, striving to smile.

"My child," replied Rodolph, "you are concealing something from me; tell me, I entreat you, what thus distresses you. Never mind the bouquet."

"Oh, you know how fond I am of roses; I always was! Do you

recollect," added she, "my poor little rose-tree? I have preserved the pieces of it so carefully!"

At this terrible allusion Rodolph cried,—

"Unhappy child! is it possible that, in the midst of all the splendour that surrounds you, you think of the past? Alas! I hoped my tenderness had made you forget it."

"Forgive me, dear father; I did not mean what I said. I grieve you."

"I grieve, my child, because I know how painful it is for you thus to ponder over the past."

"Dear father, it is the first time since I have been here"

"The first time you have mentioned it, but not the first time you have thought of it; I have for a long time noticed your sadness, and was unable to account for it. My position was so delicate, though I never told you any thing, I thought of you constantly. When I contracted my marriage, I thought it would increase your happiness. I did not venture to hope you would quite forget the past; but I hoped that, cherished and supported by the amiable woman whom I had chosen for my wife, you would look upon the past as amply atoned for by your sufferings. No matter what faults you had committed, they have been a thousand times expiated by the good you have done since you have been here."

"Father!"

"Oh, let me tell you all, since a providential chance has brought about this conversation I at once desired and dreaded! I would, to secure your happiness, have sacrificed my affection for Madame d'Harville and my friendship for Murphy, had I thought they recalled the past to you."

"Oh, their presence, when they know *what I was*, and yet love me so tenderly, seems a proof of pardon and oblivion to me! I should have

been miserable if for my sake you had renounced Madame d'Harville's hand."

"Oh, you know not what sacrifice Clémence herself would have made, for she was aware of the full extent of my duties to you!"

"Duties to me! What have I done to deserve so much goodness?"

"Until the moment that Heaven restored you to me, your life had been one of sorrow and misery, and I reproach myself with your sufferings as if I had caused them, and when I see you happy, it seems to me I am forgiven. My only wish, my sole aim, is to render you as happy as you were before unhappy, to exalt you as you have been abased, for the last trace of your humiliation must disappear when you see the noblest in the land vie with each other who shall shew you most respect."

"Respect to me! Oh, no! it is to my rank and not to myself they shew respect."

"It is to you, dear child,—it is to you!"

"You love me so much, dear father, that every one thinks to please you by shewing me respect."

"Oh, naughty child!" cried Rodolph, tenderly kissing his daughter; "she will not cede any thing to my paternal pride."

"Is not your pride satisfied at my attributing the kindness I receive to you only?"

"No, that is not the same thing; I cannot be proud of myself but of you. You are ignorant of your own merits; in fifteen months your education has been so perfected that the most enthusiastic mother would be proud of you."

At this moment the door of the saloon opened, and Clémence, grand duchess of Gerolstein, entered, holding a letter in her hand.

"Here, love, is a letter from France," said she to Rodolph; "I brought it myself, because I wished to bid good-morrow to my dear child, whom I have not yet seen to-day."

"This letter arrives most opportunely," said Rodolph. "We were speaking of the Past; that monster we must destroy, since he threatens the repose of our child."

"Is it possible that these fits of melancholy we have so often remarked ——"

"Were occasioned by unhappy recollections; but now that we know the enemy we shall destroy him."

"From whom is this letter?" asked Clémence.

"From Rigolette, Germain's wife."

"Rigolette?" cried Fleur-de-Marie. "Oh, I am so glad!"

"Do you not fear that this letter may serve to awaken fresh recollections?" said Clémence in a low tone to Rodolph.

"On the contrary, I wish to destroy these recollections, and I shall, doubtless, find arms in this letter, for Rigolette is a worthy creature, who appreciated and adored our child."

Rodolph then read the following letter aloud:—

"Bouqueval Farm, August 15, 1841.

"Monseigneur,—I take the liberty of writing to you to communicate a great happiness which has occurred to us, and to ask of you another

favour,—of you, to whom we already owe so much, or rather to whom we owe the real paradise in which we live, myself, my dear Germain, and his good mother. It is this, monseigneur: For the last ten days I have been crazy with joy, for ten days ago I was confined with such a love of a little girl, which I say is the image of Germain, he says it is exactly like me, and our dear mother says it is like us both; the fact is, it has beautiful blue eyes like Germain, and black curly hair like mine."

"Good, worthy people, they deserve to be happy!" said Rodolph. "If ever there was a couple well matched it is they."

"But really, monseigneur, I must ask your pardon for this chatter. Your ears must often tingle, monseigneur, for the day never passes that we do not talk of you, when we say to each other how happy we are, how happy we were, for then your name naturally occurs. Excuse this blot, monseigneur; but, without thinking of it, I had written *Monsieur Rodolph*, as I used to say formerly, and then I scratched it out. I hope you will find my writing improved as well as my spelling, for Germain

gives me lessons, and I do not make those long ugly scrawls I used to do when you mended my pens."

"I must confess," said Rodolph, with a smile, "that my little *protégée* makes a mistake, and I am sure Germain is more frequently employed in kissing the hand of his scholar than in directing it."

"My dear duke, you are unjust," said Clémence, looking at the letter; "it is rather a large hand, but very legible."

"Why, yes, she has really improved," observed Rodolph; "it would in former days have taken eight pages to contain what she now writes in two." And he continued,—

"It is quite true, you know, monseigneur, that you used to mend my pens, and when we think of it, we two Germains, we feel quite ashamed when we recollect how free from pride you were. Ah! I am again chattering instead of saying what we wish to ask of you, monseigneur; for my husband unites with me, and it is very important, for we attach a great deal to it, as you will see. We entreat of you, monseigneur, to have the goodness to choose for us and give us a name for our dear little daughter; this has been the wish of the godfather and godmother,—and who do you think they are, monseigneur? Two persons whom you and the Marquise d'Harville have taken from misery and made very happy, as happy as we are. They are Morel, the lapidary, and Jeanne Duport, a worthy creature whom I met in prison when I went there to visit my dear Germain, and whom the marquise afterwards took out of the hospital. And now, monseigneur, you must know why we have chosen M. Morel for godfather, and Jeanne Duport for godmother. We said it would be one way of again thanking M. Rodolph for all his kindness, to have, as godfather and godmother for our little one, worthy persons who owe every thing to him and the marchioness; whilst, at the same time, Morel and Jeanne Duport are the worthiest people breathing, they are of our own class in life, and besides, as we say with Germain, they are our *kinsfolk in happiness*, for, like us, they are of the *family of your protégés*."

"Really, my dear father, this idea is most delightful and excellent!" said Fleur-de-Marie; "to take for godfather and godmother persons who owe every thing to you and my dear second mother!"

"Yes, indeed, dearest," said Clémence; "and I am deeply touched at their remembrance."

"And I am very happy to find that my favours have been so well bestowed," said Rodolph, continuing his letter.

"With the money you gave him, Morel has now become a jewel broker, and earns enough to bring up his family very respectably. Poor Louise, who is a very good girl, is going, I believe, to be married to a very worthy young man, who loves and respects her as he ought to do, for she has been unfortunate, but not guilty, and Louise's husband that is to be is perfectly sensible of this."

Rodolph laid great stress on these last words, looked at his daughter for a moment, and then continued:—

"I must add, monseigneur, that Jeanne Duport, through the generosity of the marquise, has been separated from her husband, that bad man who beat her and took every thing from her; she has now her eldest

daughter with her: they keep a small trimming shop, and are doing very well. Germain writes to you regularly, monseigneur, every month, on the subject of the *Bank for Mechanics out of Work and gratuitous Loans;* there are scarcely any sums in arrear, and we find already the good effects of it in this quarter. Nine, at least, poor families can support themselves in the dead season of work without sending their clothes and bedding to the pawnbroker's. And when work comes in, it does one's heart good to see the haste with which they return the money lent, and they bless you for the loans so serviceably advanced. Yes, monseigneur, they bless you; for, although you say you did nothing in this but appoint Germain, and that an unknown did this great benefit, we must always suppose it was you who founded it, as it appears to us the most natural idea. There is, besides, a most famous trumpet to repeat that it is you who are the real benefactor—this trumpet is Madame Pipelet, who repeats to every one that it could be no one but her *king of lodgers* (excuse her, M. Rodolph, but she always calls you so) who established such a charitable institution, and her *old darling* Alfred is of the same opinion; he is so proud and contented with his post as porter to the bank, that he says all the tricks of M. Cabrion would not have the slightest effect on him now. Germain has read in the newspapers that Martial, a colonist of Algeria, has been mentioned with great praise for the courage he had shewn in repulsing, at the head of the settlers, an attack of plundering Arabs, and that his wife, as intrepid as himself, had been slightly wounded by his side, where she handled her musket like a real grenadier; since this time, says the newspaper, she has been called *Madame Carabine.*

"Excuse this long letter, monseigneur, but I think you will not be displeased to hear from us news of all those whose benefactor you have been. I write to you from the farm at Bouqueval, where we have been since the spring with our good mother. Germain leaves us in the morning for his business, and returns in the evening. In the autumn we shall return to Paris. It is so strange, M. Rodolph, that I, who could never endure the country, am now so fond of it; I suppose it is because Germain likes it so very much. As to the farm, M. Rodolph, you who know, no doubt, where the good little Gonaleuse is, will perhaps tell her that we very often think of her as one of the dearest and gentlest creatures in the world; and that, for myself, I never think of my own happy condition without saying to myself, since M. Rodolph was also the M. Rodolph of dear Fleur-de-Marie, that, no doubt, she is by his kindness as happy as we are, and that makes one feel still more happy. Ah, how I chatter! What will you say to all this? But you are so good, and then, you know, it is your fault, if I go on as long and as merrily as Papa Crétu and Ramonette, who no longer have a chance with me in singing. You will not refuse our request, will you, monseigneur? If you will give a name to our dear little child, it will seem to us that it will bring her good fortune, like a lucky star. If I conclude by saying to you, M. Rodolph, that we try to give every assistance in our power to the poor, it is not to boast, but that you may know that we do not keep to ourselves all the happiness you have given to us; besides, we always say to those we succour, 'It is not us whom you should thank and bless, it is M. Rodolph, the best, most generous person in the world.' Adieu, monseigneur! and

pray believe that when our dear little child begins to lisp, the first word she shall utter will be your name, M. Rodolph, and the next those you wrote on the basket which contained your generous wedding presents to me, *Labour and discretion, honour and happiness.* Thanks to these four words, our love and our care, we hope, monseigneur, that our child will be always worthy to pronounce the name of him who has been our benefactor, and that of all the unfortunates he ever knew ——. Forgive me, monseigneur, but I cannot finish without the big tears in my eyes, but they are tears of happiness. Excuse all errors, if you please; it is not my fault, but I cannot see very clearly, and I scribble.

"I have the honour to be, monseigneur, your respectful and most grateful servant,

RIGOLETTE GERMAIN.

"P.S. Ah, monseigneur, in reading my letter over again, I see I have often written *Monsieur Rodolph*, but you will excuse me, for you know, monseigneur, that under any and every name we respect and bless you alike."

"Dear little Rigolette!" said Clémence, affected by the letter; "how full of good and right feeling is her letter!"

"It is, indeed!" replied Rodolph. "She is an admirable disposition, her heart is all that is good; and our dear daughter appreciates her as we do," he added, addressing Fleur-de-Marie, when, struck by her pale countenance, he exclaimed, "But what ails you, dearest?"

"Alas! what a painful contrast between my position and that of Rigolette. *Labour and discretion, honour and happiness*, these four words declare all that my life has been, all that it ought to have been—a young, industrious, and discreet girl, a beloved wife, a happy mother, an honoured woman, such is her destiny; whilst I ——"

"What do you say?"

"Forgive me, my dear father—do not accuse me of ingratitude. But in spite of your unspeakable tenderness and that of my second mother—in spite of the splendour with which I am surrounded—in spite of your sovereign power, my shame is incurable. Nothing can destroy the past. Forgive me, dear father! Until now I have concealed this from you; but the recollection of my original degradation drives me to despair—kills me——"

"Clémence, do you hear?" cried Rodolph in extreme distress. "Oh, fatality—fatality! Now I curse my fears, my silence. This sad idea, so long and deeply rooted in her mind, has, unknown to us, made fearful ravages; and it is too late to contend against this sad error. Oh, I am indeed wretched!"

"Courage, my dearest!" said Clémence to Rodolph. "You said but now that it is best to know the enemy that threatens us. We know now the cause of our child's sorrow, and will triumph over it, because we shall have with us reason, justice, and our excessive love for her."

"And then she will see, too, that her affliction, if it be, indeed, incurable, will render ours incurable," said Rodolph.

After a protracted silence, during which Fleur-de-Marie appeared to

recover herself, she took Rodolph's and Clémence's hands in her own, and said in a voice deeply affected, "Hear me, beloved father, and you my

best of mothers. God has willed it, and I thank Him for it, that I should no longer conceal from you all that I feel. I must have done so shortly, and told you what I will now avow, for I could not longer have kept it concealed."

"Ah, now I comprehend!" ejaculated Rodolph, "and there is no longer any hope for her."

"I hope in the future, my dear father, and this hope gives me strength to speak thus to you."

"And what can you hope for the future, poor child, since your present fate only causes you grief and torment?"

"I will tell you; but before I do so let me recall to you the past, and confess before God, who hears me, what I have felt to this time."

"Speak—speak—we listen!" was Rodolph's reply.

"As long as I was in Paris with you, my dearest father, I was so happy that such days of bliss cannot be paid for too dearly by years of suffering. You see I have at least known happiness."

"For some days, perhaps."

"Yes, but what pure and unmingled happiness! The future dazzled me—a father to adore, a second mother to cherish doubly, for she replaced mine, whom I never knew. Then—for I will confess all—my pride was roused in spite of myself. So greatly did I rejoice in belonging to you. If then I sometimes thought vaguely of the past, it was to say to myself, 'I, formerly so debased, am the beloved daughter of a sovereign prince, whom everybody blesses and reveres: I, formerly so wretched, now enjoy all the splendours of luxury, and an existence almost royal. Alas! my father, my good fortune was so unlooked for, your power surrounded me with so much brilliancy that I was, perhaps, excusable in allowing myself to be thus blinded."

"Excusable!—nothing could be more natural, my angelic girl. What was there wrong in being proud of a rank which was your own? in enjoying the advantages of a position to which I had restored you? I remember at this time you were so delightfully gay, and said to me in accents I never can again hope to hear, '*Dearest father, this is too, too much happiness!*' Unfortunately it was these recollections that begat in me this deceitful security."

"Do you remember, my father," said Fleur-de-Marie, unable to overcome a shudder of horror, "do you remember the terrible scene that preceded our departure from Paris when your carriage was stopped?"

"Yes," answered Rodolph in a tone of melancholy; "Brave Chourineur! after having once more saved my life—he died—there, before our eyes."

"Well, my father, at the moment when that unhappy man expired, do you know whom I saw looking steadfastly at me? Ah! that look—that look! it has haunted me ever since!" added Fleur-de-Marie with a shudder.

"What look? Of whom do you speak?" cried Rodolph.

"Of the *ogress of the tapis-franc!*" answered Fleur-de-Marie.

"That monster! You saw her!—and where?"

"Did you not see her in the tavern where the Chourineur died? She was amongst the women who surrounded us."

"Ah! now," said Rodolph in a tone of despair, "I understand. Struck with horror as you were at the murder of the Chourineur, you must have imagined that you saw something prophetic in the sinister rencontre!"

"Yes, indeed, father, it was so. At the sight of the ogress I felt a death-like shiver, and it seemed that under her scowl my heart which, until then, had been light, joyous, bounding, was instantly chilled to ice. Yes, to meet that woman at the very instant when the Chourineur died, saying, '*Heaven is just!*' it seemed to me as a rebuke from Providence for my proud forgetfulness of the past, which I was hereafter to expiate by humility and repentance."

"But the past was forced on you, and you are not responsible for that in the sight of God!"

"You were driven to it—overcome—my poor child!"

"Once precipitated into the abyss in spite of yourself, and unable to quit it in spite of your remorse and despair, through the atrocious recklessness of the society of which you were a victim, you saw yourself for ever chained to this den, and it required that chance should throw you in my way to rescue you from such thraldom."

"Then, too, my child, your father says you were the victim and not the accomplice of this infamy," said Clémence.

"But yet, my mother, I have known this infamy!" replied Fleur-de-Marie, in a tone of deepest grief. "Nothing can destroy these fearful recollections—they pursue me incessantly, not as formerly, in the midst of the peaceful inhabitants of the farm, or the fallen women who were my companions in Saint-Lazare—but they pursue me even in this palace, filled with the *élite* of Germany—they pursue me even to my father's arms, even to the steps of his throne!" And Fleur-de-Marie burst into an agony of tears.

Rodolph and Clémence remained silent in presence of this fearful expression of unextinguishable remorse; they wept, too, for they perceived that their consolations were vain.

"Since then," continued Fleur-de-Marie, drying her tears, "I say to myself, every moment in the day, with bitter shame, 'I am honoured, revered, and the most eminent and venerated persons surround me with respect and attention. In the eyes of a whole court the sister of an emperor has deigned to fasten my bandeau on my forehead, and I have lived in the mire of the Cité, familiar with thieves and murderers.' Forgive me, dearest father, but the more elevated my position, the more deeply sensitive have I been to the deep degradation into which I had fallen; and at every homage paid me I feel myself guilty of profanation, and think it sacrilege to receive such attentions, *knowing what I have been;* and then I say to myself, 'If God should please that the past were all known, with what deserved scorn would she be treated whom now they elevate so high! what a just and fearful punishment!'"

"But, poor girl, my wife and I know the past; we are worthy of our rank, and yet we cherish you."

"Because you feel for me the tenderness of a father and mother."

"But remember all the good you have done since your residence here, and the excellent and holy institution you have founded for orphans and poor forsaken girls! Then, too, the affection which the worthy abbess of Sainte Hermangilde evinces towards you, ought not that to be attributed to your unfeigned piety?"

"Whilst the praises of the abbess of Sainte Hermangilde refer only to my present conduct, I accept it without scruple; but when she cites my example to the noble young ladies who have taken vows in the abbey, I feel as if I were the accomplice of an infamous falsehood."

After a long silence Rodolph resumed, with deep melancholy,—

"I see it is unavailing to persuade you! reasoning is impotent against a conviction the more steadfast as it is derived from a noble and generous feeling. The contrast of your past and present position must be a perpetual punishment; forgive me for saying so, my beloved one!"

"Forgive you! and for what, my dear father?"

"For not having foreseen your excessive susceptibility, which, from the delicacy of your heart, I should have anticipated. And yet what could I have done? It was my duty solemnly to recognise you as my daughter; yet I was wrong—wrong to be too proud of you! I should have concealed my treasure, and lived in retirement with Clémence and you, instead of raising you high, so high that the past would disappear as I hoped from your eyes."

Several knocks were heard at this moment, which interrupted the conversation. Rodolph opened the door, and saw Murphy, who said,—

"I beg your royal highness's pardon for thus disturbing you, but a courier from the Prince of Herkausen-Oldenzaal has just arrived with this letter, which he says is very important, and must be delivered immediately to your royal highness."

"Thanks, good Murphy. Do not go away," said Rodolph, with a sigh, "I shall want you presently." And the prince, closing the door, remained a moment in the anteroom to read the letter which Murphy had brought him, and which was as follows:—

"My Lord,—Trusting that the bonds of relationship existing between us, as well as the friendship with which you have ever honoured me, will excuse the boldness of the step I am about to take, I will at once enter upon the purport of my letter, dictated as it is by a conscientious desire to act as becomes the man your highness deigns to style his friend. Fifteen months have now elapsed since you returned from France, bringing with you your long-lost daughter, whom you so happily discovered living with that mother from whom she had never been parted, and whom you espoused when *in extremis*, in order to legitimise the Princess Amelie. Thus ennobled, of matchless beauty, and, as I learn from my sister the abbess of Sainte Hermangilde, endowed with a character pure and elevated as the princely race from which she springs, who would not envy your happiness in possessing such a treasure? I will now candidly state the purport of my letter, although I should certainly have been the bearer of the request it contains, were it not that a severe indisposition detains me at Oldenzaal. During the time my son passed at Gerolstein he had frequent opportunities of seeing the Princess Amelie, whom he loves with a passionate but carefully concealed affection. This fact I have considered it right to acquaint you with, the more especially as, after having received and entertained my son as affectionately as though he had been your own, you added to your kindness by inviting him to return, as quickly as his duties would allow, to enjoy that sweet companionship so precious to his heart; and it is probable that my apprising you of this circumstance may induce you to withdraw your intended hospitality to one who has presumed to aspire to the affections of your peerless child. I am perfectly well aware that the daughter of whom you are so justly proud might aspire to the first alliance in Europe, but I also know that so tender and devoted a parent as yourself would not hesitate to bestow the hand of the Princess Amelie on my son, if you believed by so doing her happiness would be secured. It is not for me to dwell upon Henri's merits—you have been graciously pleased to bestow your approval on his conduct thus far; and I venture to hope he will never give you cause to change the favourable opinion you have deigned to express concerning him. Of this be assured, that whatever may be your determination, we shall bow in respectful and implicit submission to it, and that I shall never be otherwise than your royal highness's most humble and obedient servant,

"Gustave Paul,

"Prince of Heckhaüsen-Oldenzaal."

After the perusal of this letter Rodolph remained for some time sad and pensive; then a gleam of hope darting across his mind, he returned to his daughter, whom Clémence was most tenderly consoling.

"My dear child," said he, as he entered, "you yourself observed that this day seemed destined to be one of important discoveries and solemn

explanations, but I did not then think your words would be so strikingly verified as they seem likely to be."

"Dear father, what has happened?"

"Fresh sources of uneasiness have arisen."

"On whose account?"

"On yours, my child. I fear you have only revealed to us a portion of your griefs."

"Be kind enough to explain yourself," said Fleur-de-Marie, blushing.

"Then hearken to me, my beloved child. You have, perhaps, good cause to fancy yourself unhappy; when at the commencement of our conversation you spoke of the hopes you still entertained, I understood your meaning, and my heart seemed broken by the blow with which I was menaced: for I read but too clearly that you desired to quit me for ever, and to bury yourself in the eternal seclusion of a cloister. My child, say, have I not divined your intentions?"

"If you would consent," murmured forth Fleur-de-Marie, in a faint, gasping voice.

"Would you, then, quit us?" exclaimed Clémence.

"The abbey of Ste. Hermangilde is in the immediate neighbourhood of Gerolstein, and I should frequently see yourself and my father."

"Remember, my child, that vows such as you would take are not to be recalled. You are scarcely eighteen years of age, and one day you may—possibly——"

"Oh, think not I should ever regret my choice! there is no rest or peace for me save in the solitude of a cloister: there I may be happy, if you and my second mother will but continue to me your affection."

"The duties and consolations of a religious life," said Rodolph, "might, certainly, if not cure, at least alleviate the anguish of your lacerated and desponding mind; and although your resolution will cost me dear, I cannot but approve of it."

"Rodolph!" cried the astonished Clémence, "do I hear aright? Is it possible *you*——"

"Allow me more fully to explain myself," replied Rodolph. Then addressing his daughter, he said, "But before an irrevocable decision is pronounced, it would be well to ascertain if nothing more suitable, both to your inclinations and our own, could be found for you than the life of a nun."

Fleur-de-Marie and Clémence started at Rodolph's words and manner, while, fixing an earnest gaze on his daughter, the prince said, abruptly,—

"What think you, my child, of your cousin, Prince Henri?"

The brightest blush spread over the fair face of Fleur-de-Marie, who, after a momentary hesitation, threw herself weeping in her father's arms.

"Then you love him, do you not, my darling child?" cried Rodolph, tenderly pressing her hands; "fear not to confide the truth to your best friends."

"Alas!" replied Fleur-de-Marie, "you know not what it has cost me to conceal from you the state of my heart! Had you questioned me on the subject, I would gladly have told you all, but shame closed my lips, and would still have done so, but for your inquiry into the nature of my feelings."

"And have you any suspicion that Henri is aware of your love?"

"Gracious heavens, dearest father!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, shrinking back in terror, "I trust not!"

"Do you believe he returns your affection?"

"Oh, no, no! I trust he does not! he would suffer too deeply."

"And what gave rise to the love you entertained for your cousin?"

"Alas, I know not! it grew upon me almost unconsciously. Do you remember a portrait of a youth dressed as a page, in the apartments of the Abbess de Ste. Hermangilde?"

"I know; it was the portrait of Henri."

"Believing the picture to be of distant date, I one day in your presence remarked upon the extreme beauty of the countenance, when you

jestingly replied that it was the likeness of an ancestor who, in his youth, had displayed an extraordinary share of sense, courage, and every esti-

mable quality; this strengthened my first impression, and frequently after that day I used to delight in recalling to my mind the fine countenance and noble features of one I believed to have been long numbered with the dead. By degrees these reveries began to form one of my greatest pleasures, and many an hour have I passed gazing, amid smiles and tears, on one I fondly hoped I might be permitted to know and to love in another world. For in this," continued poor Fleur-de-Marie, with a most touching expression, "I well know I am unworthy to aspire to the love of any one but you, my kind, indulgent parents."

"I can now understand the nature of the reproof you once gave me for having misled you on the subject of the portrait."

"Conceive, dearest father, what was my confusion when I learnt from the superior that the portrait was a living subject—that of her nephew! My trouble was extreme, and earnestly did I endeavour to erase from my heart all the fond associations connected with that picture. In vain! the pertinacity with which I strove to forget but rivetted the impression I had received; and, unfortunately, dear father, you rendered the task of forgetting more difficult, by continually eulogising the heart, disposition, and principles of Prince Henri."

"You loved him, then, my child, from merely seeing his likeness and hearing his praises?"

"Without positively loving him, I felt myself attracted towards him by an irresistible impulse, for which I bitterly reproached myself; my only consolation was the thought that no person knew my fatal secret. For how could I presume to love? how excuse my ingratitude in not contenting myself with the tenderness bestowed on me by you my father, and you, also, dearest mother? In the midst of all these conflicting feelings I met my cousin, for the first time, at a ball given by you to the Archduchess Sophie; his resemblance to the portrait too well assured me it was he; and your introducing Prince Henri to me as a near relative afforded me ample opportunities of discovering that his manners were as captivating as his mind was cultivated."

"It is easy to conceive, then, that a mutual passion sprung up between you! Indeed, he won upon my regard ere I was aware of the ground he had gained; he spoke of you so admiringly, yet so respectfully."

"You had yourself praised him so highly."

"Not more than he deserved. It is impossible to possess a more noble nature, or a more generous and elevated character."

"I beseech you, dearest father, to spare me the fresh trial of hearing him thus praised by you. Alas! I am already wretched enough."

"Go on, my child. I have a reason in thus extolling your cousin—I will explain hereafter: proceed."

"Though aware of the danger of thus daily associating with my cousin, I felt unable to withdraw myself from the pleasure his society afforded me; nor, spite of my implicit reliance on your indulgence, dear father, durst I disclose my fears to you. I could then only redouble my efforts to conceal my unfortunate attachment, and—shall I confess?—there were moments when, forgetting the past, I gave myself up to all the dear delights of a friendship hitherto unknown to me. But the departure of Prince Henri from your court tore the veil from my eyes, and shewed me how truly and

ardently I loved him—though not with a sister's love, as I had made myself believe. I had resolved to open my heart entirely to you on this subject," continued Fleur-de-Marie, whose strength seemed utterly exhausted by her long confession, "and then to ask you what remained for one so every way unfortunate but to seek the repose of a cloister."

"Then, dearest daughter, let me answer the question ere you have put it, by saying there is a prospect as bright and smiling awaits your acceptance, as that you propose is cheerless and gloomy."

"What mean you?"

"Now, then, listen to me. It was impossible for an affection as great as mine to be blinded to the mutual affection subsisting between yourself and your cousin; my penetration also quickly discovered that his passion for you amounted to idolatry; that he had but one hope, one desire on earth —that of being loved by you. At the time I played off that little joke respecting the portrait, I had not the least expectation of Henri's visiting Gerolstein. When, however, he did come, I saw no reason for changing the manner in which I had always treated him, and I therefore invited him to visit us on the same terms of friendly relationship he had hitherto

done. A very little time had elapsed ere Clémence and myself saw plainly enough the cause of his frequent visits, or the mutual delight you felt in each other's society. Then mine became a difficult task. On the one hand, I rejoiced as a father that one so every way worthy of you should have won your affection; then on the other hand, my poor dear child, your past misfortunes forbade me to encourage the idea of uniting you to your cousin, to whom I several times spoke in a manner very different to the tone I should have adopted, had I contemplated bestowing on him your hand. Thus placed in a position so delicate, I endeavoured to preserve a strict neutrality, discouraging Prince Henri's attentions by every means in my power, and yet manifesting towards himself the same paternal kindness with which I had always treated him; and besides, my poor girl, after a life of so much unhappiness as yours, I could not bring myself suddenly to tear away the innocent pleasure you appeared to feel in the company of your cousin. It was something to see you even temporarily happy and cheerful, and even now your acquaintance with Prince Henri may be the means of securing your future tranquillity."

"Dear father! I understand you not."

"Prince Paul, Henri's father, has just sent me this letter. While considering such an alliance as an honour too great to aspire to, he solicits your hand for his son, who, he states, is inspired with a passion for you."

"Dearest father!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, concealing her face with her hands, "do you forget?"

"I forget nothing—not even that to-morrow you enter a convent,

where, besides being for ever lost to me, you will pass the remainder of your days in tears and austerity. If I must part with you, let it be to give you to a husband who will love you almost as tenderly as your father."

"Married!—and to him, father! You cannot mean it!"

"Indeed I do—but on one condition: that directly after your marriage has been celebrated here, without pomp or parade, you shall depart with your husband for some tranquil retreat in Italy or Switzerland, where you may live unknown, and merely pass for opulent persons of middle rank. And my reason for attaching this proviso to my consent is because I feel assured that, in the bosom of simple and unostentatious happiness, you would by degrees forget the hateful past, which is now only more painfully contrasted with the pomp and ceremony by which you are surrounded."

"Rodolph is right," said Clémence. "With Henri for your companion, and happy in each other's affection, past sorrows will soon be forgotten."

"And as I could not wholly part with you, Clémence and I would pay you a visit each year. Then when time shall have healed your wounded spirit, my poor child, and present felicity shall have effaced all recollections of the past, you will return to dwell among us, never more to part."

"Forget the past in present happiness!" murmured Fleur-de-Marie.

"Even so, my child," replied Rodolph, scarcely able to restrain his emotion at seeing his daughter's scruples thus shaken.

"Can it be possible," cried Fleur-de-Marie, "that such unspeakable felicity is reserved for me?—The wife of Henri!—and one day to pass my life between him—yourself—and my second mother!" continued she, more subdued by the ineffable delight such a picture created in her mind.

"All—all that happiness shall be yours, my precious child!" exclaimed Rodolph, fondly embracing Fleur-de-Marie. "I will reply at once to Henri's father that I consent to the marriage. Comfort yourself with the certainty that our separation will be but short; the fresh duties you will take upon yourself in a wedded life will serve to drive away all past retrospections and painful reminiscences; and should you yourself be a mother, you will know and feel how readily a parent sacrifices her own regrets and griefs to promote the happiness of her child."

"A mother!—I a mother!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, with bitter despair, awakening at that word from the sweet illusion in which her memory seemed temporarily lulled. "Oh, no!—I am unworthy to bear that sacred name! I should expire of shame in the presence of my own child, if indeed I could survive the horrible disclosures I must necessarily make to its father of my past life! Oh, never—never!"

"My child! for pity's sake, listen to me!"

Pale and beautiful amidst her deep distress, Fleur-de-Marie arose with all the majesty of incurable sorrow, and, looking earnestly at Rodolph, she said, "We forget that, ere Prince Henri made me his wife, he should be acquainted with the past!"

"No, no, my daughter," replied Rodolph, "I had by no means forgotten what he both *ought* to know and *shall* learn of the melancholy tale."

"Think you not that I should die, were I thus degraded in his eyes?"

"And he will also admit and feel," added Clémence, "that if *I* style you *my daughter*, he may, without fear or shame, safely call you *his wife*."

"Nay, dearest mother, I love Prince Henri too truly to bestow on him a hand that has been polluted by the touch of the ruffians of the Cité."

* * * * * *

A short time after this painful scene, the following announcement appeared in *the Official Gazette of Gerolstein*:—"The taking of the veil by the most high and mighty Princess Amelie of Gerolstein took place yesterday in the Abbey of Sainte Hermangilde, in the presence of the reigning grand duke and all his court. The vows of the novice were received by the right reverend and illustrious Lord Charles Maximus, archbishop of Oppenheim; monseigneur Annibal André, one of the princes of Delphes and Bishop of Ceuta, *in partibus infidelium*, and apostolic nuncio, bestowed the salutation and PAPAL BENEDICTION. The sermon was preached by the most reverend Seigneur Pierre d'Asfeld, canon of the Chapter of Cologne, and count of the Holy Roman Empire. —VENI CREATOR OPTIME!"

CHAPTER III.

THE VOWS.

RODOLPH TO CLÉMENCE.

Gerolstein, 12th January, 1842.

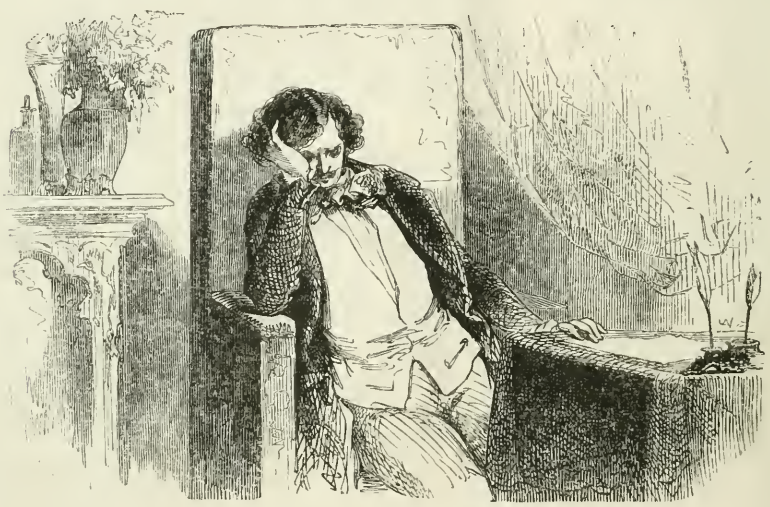
Your assurance that your father is better, induces me to hope you will be enabled to return here with him shortly. I dreaded that at Rosenfeld, situated in the midst of the woods, he would be exposed to the piercing cold of our rigorous winters, but, unfortunately, his fondness for hunting

rendered all our advice useless. I entreat you, Clémence, as soon as your father can bear the motion of the carriage, quit that country and this habitation, only fit for those Germans of an iron frame whose race has now disappeared.

The ceremony of our poor child's taking the vows is fixed for to-morrow, the 13th January, the fatal day on which I drew my sword on my father! Alas! I thought too soon I was forgiven! The hope of passing my life with you and my child made me forget that it was *she* who had been punished up to the present time, and that my punishment was to come. And it is come! when, six months ago, she disclosed the double torture she suffered—*her incurable shame for the past, and her hopeless passion for Henri.*

These two sentiments became, by a fatal logic, the cause of her fixed resolve to take the veil. You know that we could not conceal from her that, had we been in her place, we should have pursued the same noble and courageous course she has adopted. How could we answer those humble words—"*I love Prince Henri too much to give him a hand that has been touched by the bandits of the Cité!*"

I have seen her this morning, and though she seemed less pale than usual—though she said she did not suffer, yet her health gives me the most mortal alarm. Alas! this morning, when I saw beneath the veil



those noble features, I could not refrain from thinking how beautiful she looked the day of our marriage;—it seemed that our happiness was reflected on her face. As I told you, I saw her this morning. She does not know that to-morrow the Princess Juliana resigns her abbatical dignity, and that she has been unanimously chosen to succeed her.

Since the beginning of her novitiate there has been but one opinion of her piety, her charity, and the exactitude with which she fulfils all the rules of the order: she even exaggerates their austerity. She exercises in the convent that authority she exercised everywhere, but of which she herself is ignorant. She confessed to me this morning that she is not so absorbed by her religious duties as to forget the past.

"I accuse myself, dear father," said she, "because I cannot help reflecting that, had Heaven pleased to spare me the degradation that has

stained my life, I might have lived happily with you and my husband. Spite of myself, I reflect on this, and on what passed in the Cité. In vain I beseech Heaven to deliver me from these temptations—to fill my heart with Himself; but he does not hear my prayers, doubtless because my life has rendered me unworthy of communion with him."

"But," cried I, clinging to this faint glimmer of hope, "it is not yet too late—your novitiate is only over to-day—you are yet free. Renounce this austere life, dwell again with us, and our tenderness shall soften your grief."

Shaking her head sorrowfully, she replied,—

"The cloister is, indeed, solitary for me, accustomed as I have been to your tender care; doubtless cruel recollections come over me, but I am consoled by the knowledge that I am performing my duty,—I know that everywhere else I should be liable to be placed in that position in which I have already suffered so much. Your daughter shall do what she ought to do, suffer what she ought to suffer."

Without founding any great hopes on this interview, I yet said to myself, "She can renounce the cloister. But as she is determined, I can but repeat her words, '*God alone can offer me a refuge worthy of himself.*'" Adieu, dear Clémence! it consoles me to see you grieve with me, for I can say *our* child without egotism in my sufferings. Often this thought lightens my sorrow, for you are left to me, and what is left to Fleur-de-Marie? Adieu again—return soon.

R.

Abbey of Ste. Hermangilde. Four o'clock in the morning.

Reassure yourself, Clémence! thank God, the danger is over, but the crisis was terrible. Last evening, agitated by my thoughts, I recollected the paleness and languor of my poor child, and that she was obliged to pass almost all the night in the church in prayer. I sent Murphy and David to demand the Princess Juliana's permission to remain until the morrow in the mansion that Henri occupied usually; thus my child would have prompt assistance, and I prompt intelligence, in case that her strength failed under this rigorous, I will not say cruel, obligation to pass the whole of a cold winter's night in the church. I wrote to Fleur-de-Marie that, whilst I respected her religious exercises, I besought her to watch in her cell and not in the church. This was her reply:—

"My dear Father,—I thank you for this fresh proof of your tenderness, but be not alarmed, I am sufficiently strong to perform my duty. Your daughter must be guilty of no weakness: the rule orders it, I must submit. Should it cause me some physical sufferings, how joyfully shall I offer them to God! Adieu, dear father! I cannot say I pray for you, because whenever I pray to Heaven I cannot help remembering you in my prayers. You have been to me on earth what God will be, if I merit it, in heaven. Bless your child, who will be to-morrow the spouse of heaven.

"Sister Amelie."

This letter, in some measure, reassured me; however I had, also, a vigil to keep. At nightfall I went to a pavilion I had built, near my

father's monument, in expiation of this fatal night. About one o'clock I heard Murphy's voice, he came from the convent in order to inform me that, as I had feared, my unhappy child, spite of her resolution, had not had sufficient strength to accomplish this barbarous custom. At eight o'clock in the evening Fleur-de-Marie knelt and prayed until midnight, but, overpowered by her emotion and the intense cold, she fainted; two nuns instantly raised her, and bore her to her cell. David was instantly summoned, and Murphy came to me. I hastened to the convent, where the abbess assured me that my daughter's swoon, from which she had recovered, had been caused only by her weakness, but that David feared that my presence might seriously affect her. I feared they were preparing me for something more dreadful, but the superior said,—

"I assure you, monseigneur, the princess is in no danger; the restorative the doctor has given her has greatly recruited her strength."

David soon returned. She was better, but had insisted upon continuing her vigil, consenting only to kneel upon a cushion.

"She is in the church, then?" cried I.

"Yes, monseigneur, but she will quit it in a quarter of an hour."

I entered the church, and by the faint light of a lamp I saw her kneeling and praying fervently. Three o'clock struck; two sisters, seated in the stalls, advanced and spoke to her; she crossed herself, rose, and traversed the choir with a firm step, and yet as she passed the lamp she seemed to me deathly pale. I remain at the abbey until the ceremony be over. I think now it is useless to send this letter incomplete. I will forward it to-morrow, with all the details of this sad day. Adieu, dearest! —I am heart-broken—pity me!

R.

THE LAST CHAPTER.

THE 13TH OF JANUARY.

RODOLPH TO CLÉMENCE.

THE 13th of January! now a doubly sinister anniversary! Dearest, we have lost her for ever! all is over—ended all! It is true, then, that there is a horrid pleasure in relating a terrible grief. Yesterday I was complaining of the necessity that kept you from me; to-day, Clémence, I congratulate myself that you are not here—you would have suffered too much. This morning I was in a light slumber, and was awakened by the sound of bells. I started in affright—it seemed to me a funereal sound—a knell! In fact, our daughter is dead—dead to us! and from to-day, Clémence, you must begin to wear her mourning in your heart, a heart always so maternally disposed towards her. Whether our child be buried beneath the marble of the tomb or the vault of the cloister, what is the difference to us? Hardly eighteen years of age, yet dead to the world! At noon the *profession* took place, with solemn pomp, and I was present, concealed behind the curtains of our pew. I felt, but even with greater intensity, all the poignant emotion we underwent at her novitiate. How strange! she is adored! and they believe, universally, that she was attracted to a religious life by an irresistible vocation; and yet whilst they believed it was a happy event for her, an overwhelming sadness weighed down the spectators. There appeared in the very air, as it were, a doleful foreboding, and it was founded, if only half realised. The profession terminated, they led our child into the chapter-room, where the nomination of the new abbess was to take place, and, thanks to my sovereign privilege, I went into this room to await Fleur-de-Marie's return to the choir. She soon entered: her emotion and weakness were so excessive that two of the sisters supported her. I was alarmed, less at her paleness and the great change in her features, than at the peculiar expression of her smile, which seemed to me imprinted with a kind of secret satisfaction. Clémence, I say to you, perhaps we may very soon require all our courage,—*I feel within myself* that our child is mortally smitten. May Heaven grant that I am deceived, and may my presentiments arise only from the despairing sadness which this melancholy spectacle has inspired! Fleur-de-Marie entered the chapter-room, all the stalls were filled by the nuns. She went modestly to place herself last on the left-hand side, still leaning on the arm of one of the sisters, for she yet appeared very weak. The Princess Juliana was seated at the end of the apartment, with the grand prioress on one side and another dignitary on the other, holding in

her hand the golden crozier, the symbol of abbatial authority. There was profound silence: and then the lady abbess rose, took the crozier in her hand, and said, in a voice of great emotion,—

"My dear daughters, my great age compels me to confide to younger hands this emblem of my spiritual power," and she pointed to the crozier. "I am authorised by a bull of our holy father; I will, therefore, present to the benediction of monseigneur the Archbishop of Oppenheim, and to the approbation of his royal highness the grand duke our sovereign, whosoever of my dear daughters shall be pointed out by you to succeed me. Our grand prioress will inform you of the result of the election, and she who has been chosen shall receive my crozier and ring."

I did not take my eyes off my daughter. Standing up in her stall, her two hands folded over her bosom, her eyes cast down, and half

covered by her white veil and the long folds of her black gown, she was pensive and motionless, not supposing for a moment that she would herself be elected, as this fact had been communicated by the abbess to no one but myself.

The grand prioress took a book and read,—

"Each of our dear sisters having been, according to the rule, requested a week since to place her vote in the hands of our holy mother, and keep her choice secret until this moment; in the name of our holy mother I declare to you, my dear, dear sisters, that one of you has, by her exemplary piety, merited the unanimous suffrages of the community, and that she is our sister Amelie, the most noble and puissant Princess of Gerolstein."

At these words a murmur of pleased surprise and satisfaction went round the apartment; the eyes of all the nuns were fixed on my daughter with an expression of tender sympathy, and, in spite of my painful forebodings, I was myself deeply touched at this nomination, which, done isolatedly and secretly, had yet presented such an affecting unanimity.

The abbess continued, in a serious and loud voice,—

"My dear daughters, if it be, indeed, Sister Amelie whom you think the most worthy and most deserving of you all,—if it be she whom you recognise as your spiritual superior, let each of you reply to me in turn, my dear daughters."

And each nun replied in a clear voice,—

"Freely and voluntarily I have chosen, and I do choose, Sister Amelie for my holy mother and superior."

Overcome by inexpressible emotion my poor child fell on her knees, clasped her hands, and remained so until each vote was declared. Then the abbess, placing the crozier and the ring in the hands of the grand prioress, advanced towards my daughter to take her hand and conduct her to the abbatial seat.

"Rise, my dear daughter," said the abbess; "come and assume the place that belongs to you. Your virtues, and not your rank, have obtained for you the position you have gained."

Fleur-de-Marie, trembling, advanced a few steps, and said,—

"Pardon me, holy mother, but I would speak to my sisters."

"Then first place yourself, my dear child, in your abbatial seat," said the princess; "it is from thence your voice shall be heard."

"That place, holy mother, never can be mine!" replied Fleur-de-Marie, in a low and tremulous voice.

"What mean you, my dear daughter?"

"So high a dignity was not made for me, holy mother."

"But the wishes of all your sisters call you to it."

"Permit me, holy mother, to make here, on my knees, a solemn confession; and my sisters will see, and you, also, holy mother, that the humblest condition is not humble enough for me."

"This arises from your modesty, my dear child," said the superior, with kindness, believing that the unhappy girl was giving way to a feeling of over-delicacy.

But I divined the confession Fleur-de-Marie was about to make, and, greatly alarmed, I exclaimed, in a voice of entreaty,—

"My child, I conjure thee——"

It is impossible, my dearest Clémence, to describe the look which Fleur-de-Marie gave me. In an instant she understood all, and saw how deeply I should share in the shame of this horrible revelation. She comprehended that after such a confession they might accuse me of falsehood,

for I had always made it out that Fleur-de-Marie had never left her mother. At this reflection the poor dear child thought she would be guilty of the blackest ingratitude towards me; she had not power to continue, but bowed down her head, overcome—overwhelmed.

"Again I assure you, my dear child," said the abbess, "your modesty deceives you. The unanimity of the choice of your sisters proves how worthy you are to replace me. It is not the princess—it is *Sister Amelie* who is elected. For us your life began on the day when you first put foot in this house of the Lord, and it is this exemplary and holy life that we recompense. I will say more, my dear daughter; if before you entered this retreat your life had been as wrong as it has been, on the contrary, pure and praiseworthy, the heavenly virtues of which you have given me an example since your abode here would expiate and ransom, in the eyes of the Lord, any past life, however culpable. And now, my dear daughter, judge if your modesty ought not to be reassured."

These words of the abbess were, as you may think, my Clémence, the more precious for Fleur-de-Marie, as she believed the past ineffaceable. Unfortunately, this scene had deeply moved her, and although she affected calmness and serenity, I saw that her features altered in a most distressing manner.

"I believe I have convinced you, my dear daughter," said the Princess Juliana; "and you will not cause so great a grief to your sisters as to refuse this mark of their confidence and affection?"

"No, holy mother," she said, with an expression which struck me, and in a voice more and more feeble, "I think *now* I may accept; but as I feel myself fatigued and in pain, if you will permit it, holy mother, the ceremony of the consecration shall not take place for a few days."

"As you wish, my dear daughter; but in the meanwhile, until your dignity is blessed and consecrated, take this ring, come to your place, and our dear sisters will do you homage according to our rules."

And the superior, putting the pastoral ring on Fleur-de-Marie's finger, led her to the abbatial seat. It was a simple and touching sight. Supported on one side by the grand prioress, bearing the golden crozier, and on the other by the Princess Juliana, each of the sisters, as she passed by, made obeisance to our child, and respectfully kissed her hand. But judge of my affright when she swooned before the procession of the sisters was terminated. David had not quitted the convent, and he hastened to the abbess's apartment, whither we had conveyed her, and then attended to her.

The superior having returned to close the sitting of the chapter, I remained alone with my daughter. After looking at me for some time, she said,—

"My dear father, can you forget my ingratitude?—can you forget that at the moment when I was about to make my painful confession—when you implored me ——"

"Silence! I beseech you!"

"And I did not reflect," she continued, with bitterness, "that, in telling in the face of all the world from what an abyss of depravity you had rescued me, I revealed a secret which you had preserved out of tenderness to me! It would have been to accuse you publicly—you, my father—of a dissimulation, which you only resigned yourself to assure to me a brilliant and honoured existence! Can you ever forgive me?"

Instead of replying, I pressed my lips on her forehead: she felt my tears flow. Having kissed my hands many times, she said,—

"Now I feel better, and as now I am dead to the world, I should like to make a few bequests in favour of several persons; but as all I have comes from you, do you authorise me, dearest father?"

"Say, dearest, and I will do all you desire."

"I should wish my beloved mother to keep always in the little boudoir in which she usually sits my embroidery-frame, with the work I began."

"It shall be so, love; your apartment is as when you left it. Clémence will be deeply touched by your thought of her."

"As for you, dear father, take, I pray, my large ebony arm-chair, in which I have thought of—reflected upon so much."

"I will put it beside my own, in my own private closet, and will imagine I see you in it every day, where you have so often sat," I said, unable to repress my tears.

"And now I would leave some souvenirs to those who took so much interest in me when I was unhappy. To Madame Georges I would give the writing-desk I have lately used; she taught me to write originally, so the gift will be very appropriate," she said, with her sweet smile. "As to the venerable Curé of Bouqueval, who instructed me in religion, I intend for him the beautiful crucifix in my oratory."

"Very well, my dearest child."

"I should like to send my bandeau of pearls to my good little Rigolette; it is a simple ornament which she may wear in her beautiful black hair. And as you know where Martial and La Louve are in Algeria, I should like to send to the brave woman who saved my life my gold enamelled cross. These different keepsakes, dearest father, I would have sent to them *from Fleur-de-Marie.*"

"I will do all you wish—I will not forget one."

"I am sure you will not, dearest father."

"Is there no other person present to your memory?"

The dear child understood me, and pressed my hand, whilst a slight blush tinged her pale cheeks as I said, "He is better—out of danger."

"And his father?"

"Better as his son is better. And what will you give to Henri? A souvenir from you will be a consolation so dear and precious!"

"My father, offer him my *prie-Dieu.* Alas! I have often watered it with my tears when begging from Heaven for strength to forget Henri, as I was unworthy of his love."

"How happy it will make him to see that you have had one thought of him!"

"As to the asylum for the orphans and young girls abandoned by their parents, I should wish, my dear father, that ——"

Here Rodolph's letter was broken off by these words, almost illegible:—

"Clémence, Murphy will conclude this letter! I am lost!—bereft of sense! Ah! the Thirteenth of January!"

At the end of this letter Murphy had written as follows:—

Madame,—by the order of his royal highness I complete this sorrowful recital. The two letters of monseigneur will have prepared your royal highness for the overwhelming news I have to communicate. Three hours since, whilst monseigneur was writing to your royal highness, I was waiting in the antechamber for a letter to be despatched by a courier, when suddenly I saw the Princess Juliana enter in the greatest consternation.

"Where is his royal highness?" she said to me, in an agitated voice.

"Writing to the grand duchess," I replied.

"Sir Walter," she said, "you must inform monseigneur of a terrible event. You are his friend—you should tell him—from you the blow may be less terrible!"

I understood all, and thought it most prudent to charge myself with the distressing intelligence. The superior having added that the Princess Amelie was sinking gradually, and that monseigneur must hasten to receive his daughter's last sigh, I went into the duke's room, who saw how pale I was.

"You have some bad news for me?"

"Terrible, monseigneur! But courage! courage!"

"Ah, my forebodings!" he exclaimed; and, without adding a word he ran to the cloisters. I followed him.

From the apartment of the superior the Princess Amelie had been conveyed to her cell, after her last interview with monseigneur. One of the sisters watched over her, and at the end of an hour she perceived that the Princess Amelie's voice, who spoke to her at intervals, was weaker, and more and more oppressed. The sister hastened to inform the superior, who sent for Dr. David, who administered a cordial; but it was useless, the pulse was scarcely perceptible. He saw with despair that the reiterated emotions having probably exhausted the little strength of the Princess Amelie, there was not a hope of saving her left. Monseigneur arrived at this moment. The Princess Amelie had just received the last sacrament; a slight degree of consciousness remained. In one hand, crossed over her chest, she held the *remains of her little rose-tree.*

Monseigneur fell on his knees at the foot of the bed, and sobbed "My child!—my beloved child!" in a voice of piercing agony. The Princess Amelie heard him, turned her head a little towards him, opened her eyes, tried to smile, and said, in a faint voice, "My dearest father, pardon!—Henri, too!—and my beloved mother!—pardon!"

These were her last words. After a slight struggle of one hour, she rendered her soul to God.

When his daughter had breathed her last sigh, monseigneur did not say a word; his calmness and silence were frightful. He closed the eyelids of the princess, kissed her forehead several times, took piously from her hands the relics of the little rose-tree, and left the cell. I followed him, and he returned to the house outside the cloister, when, shewing me the letter he had commenced writing to your royal highness, and to which he in vain endeavoured to add a few words, for his hand trembled too convulsively, he said to me, "I cannot write!—I am crushed!—my senses are gone! Write to the grand duchess that I have no longer a daughter!"

I have executed the orders of monseigneur. May I be allowed, as his old servant, to entreat your royal highness to hasten your return as soon as the health of M. d'Orbigny will permit? Nothing but the presence of your royal highness can calm monseigneur's despair. He will watch his daughter's remains every night until the day when she is to be buried in the grand-ducal chapel.

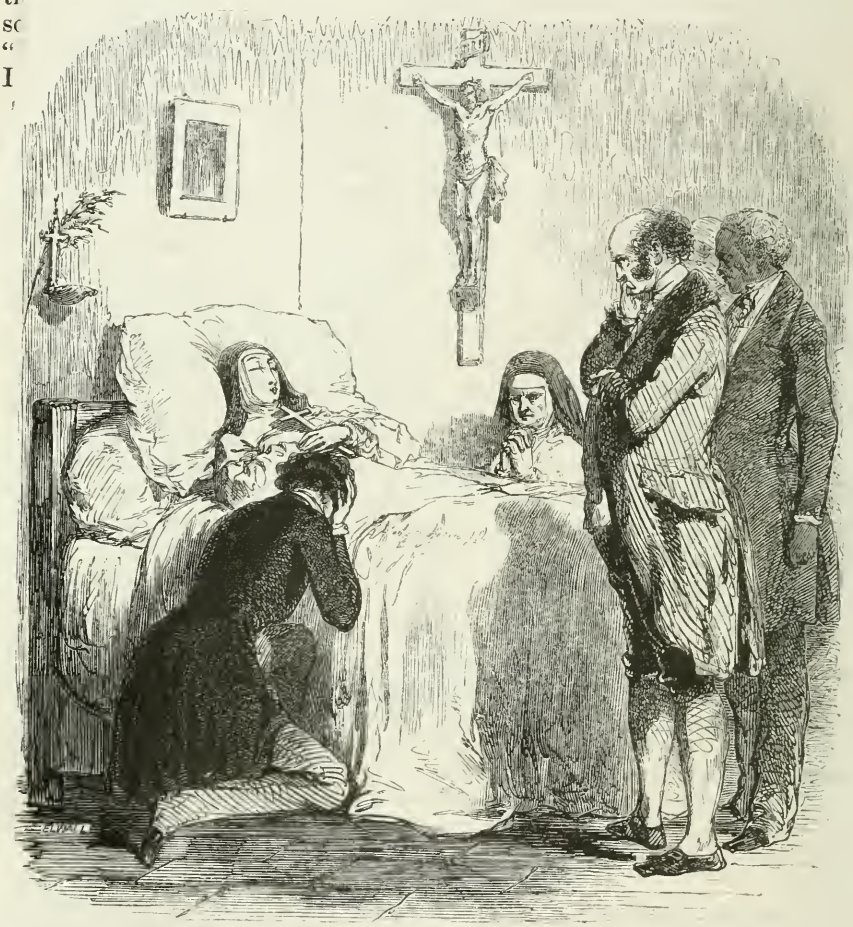
I have accomplished my sad task, madame. Deign to excuse the incoherence of this letter, and to receive the expression of respectful devotion with which I have the honour to be

Your royal highness's most obedient servant,

WALTER MURPHY.

* * * * * *

On the evening before the funeral of the Princess Amelie, Clémence arrived at Gerolstein with her father. Rodolph was not alone on the day of Fleur-de-Marie's interment.



THE END.

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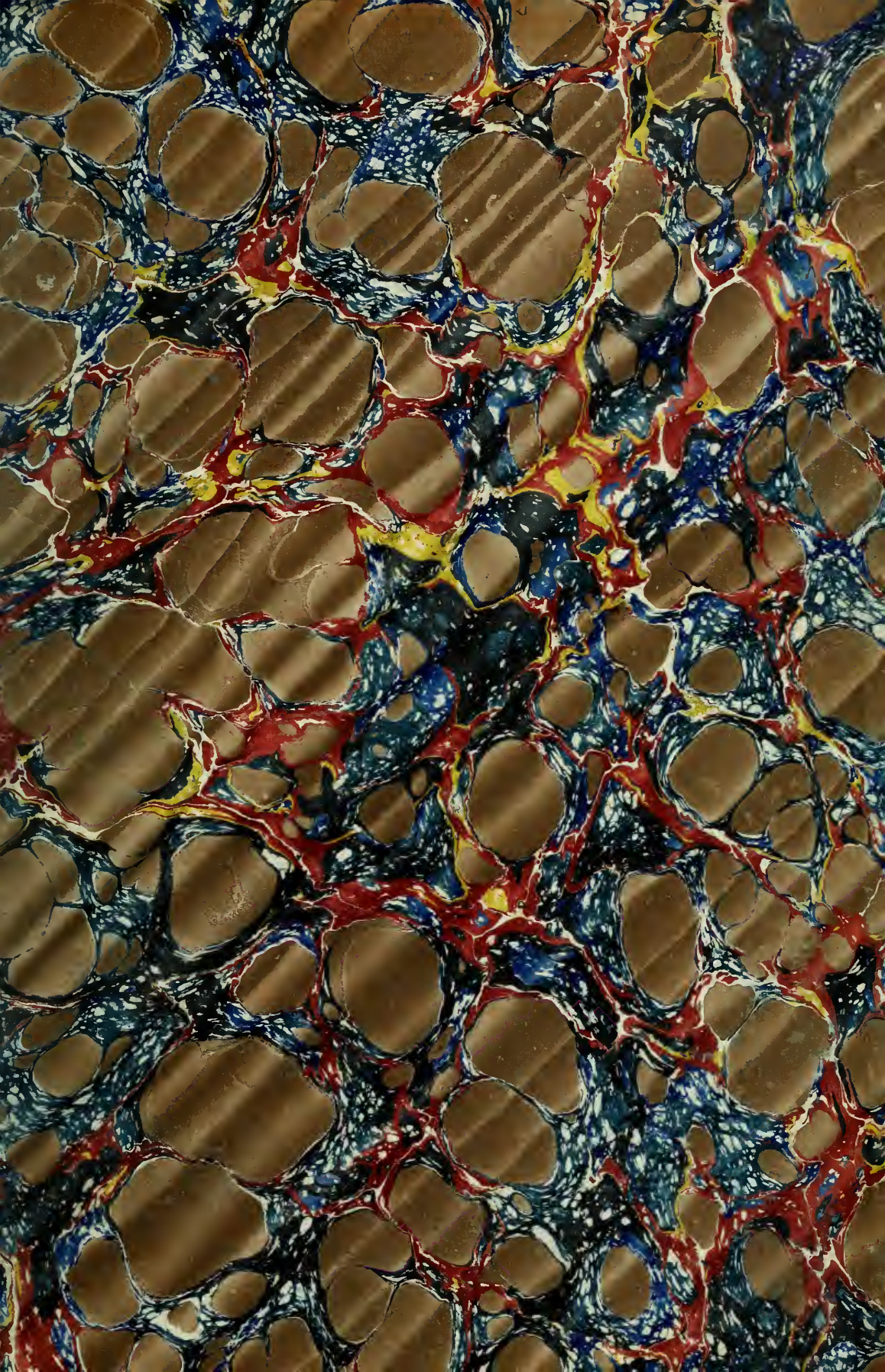
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